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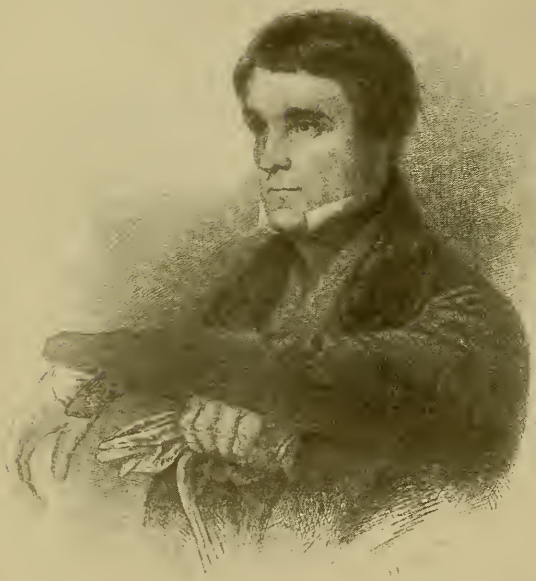

Thomas Carlyle

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THOMAS CARLYLE

THOMAS CARLYLE

A STUDY OF HIS LITERARY APPRENTICESHIP

1814-1831

BY

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PREFACE

The following essay is the result of a course in Carlyle and Emerson, given first at Yale University and later at the University of Kansas, in which *Sartor Resartus* was used as a text-book. In teaching this work it became evident that it could be appreciated properly only when studied, first, in relation to the social and economic conditions which produced it, and secondly, as the culmination of a long period of reflection and experimentation. One of the primary aims of the present undertaking is, therefore, to render clearer to general readers the meaning and origin of *Sartor*.

In studying the *Critical Essays*, however, it soon became clear that Carlyle had formulated before 1831 all of the important doctrines which constitute the gospel that he was to preach during the next thirty-five years. The present study will help the student of Carlyle to see where he found and how he developed many of these ideas.

In arranging the materials for this sketch I am aware that perfect proportion has not

been observed. The analysis of the magazine literature of the period in Part IV., for example, is perhaps unduly expanded. It has seemed best in such cases, where the facts are comparatively unfamiliar, to treat the subject at greater length and to condense the more familiar passages.

I wish to express my thanks to Professor Selden L. Whitcomb of the University of Kansas, and to Professor John C. Adams of Yale University for valuable suggestions and criticism.

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THOMAS CARLYLE

Introduction

Much has been made of Margaret Carlyle's statement that her son was a man "gey ill to live wi'." While by no means the most important fact about Carlyle, this interesting bit of biographical gossip is not without significance. It is one indication among many of his constant state of nervous irritability and high tension. Dante and Milton may be adduced in further proof that the spirit of prophecy and domestic felicity are seldom concomitants. All of these men were intense, somewhat narrow, and puritanical. Carlyle was not infrequently explosive, —in his wrath, in his laughter, in his habits of work. That this great mental and emotional energy did not entirely dissipate itself is due to another equally important quality, a remarkable unity and concentration of thought and purpose. Carlyle had only a few things to say, but he said them with tremendous force; he was blind on certain sides, but where he saw, he saw with astound-

ing clearness. In fact, that which gives to each of his writings its highest value is a certain quality of vision, capable of discerning in person, event, or phenomenon of nature that which constitutes its spiritual center, in discovering, to use Carlyle's own phrase, "the reality that lies at the bottom of appearance." Applied to the aspects of physical nature this faculty leads to a conviction of the "Divine Idea of the World," a belief that nature is only "a transitory garment veiling the Eternal Splendour." Applied to the study of human history it results in an absorbing interest in spiritual biography as contrasted with picturesque gossip concerning the clothes, manners and motions of the outward man, and in an attempt to determine the spiritual origin and meaning, the "dynamics," of historical events or of present society.

This natural intensity of gaze was further reinforced by the gradual formulation of a definite philosophy, the product at once of German Transcendentalism and his own temperament. Both the strength and the limitation of Carlyle's writing depend largely on the constant application to the subject

of his thought of a profound, but limited and somewhat rigid philosophy of life. To the reader of the present day the chief value of his criticism lies not so much in its evaluation of the objects criticised, as in the illustration, through their means, of this philosophy. We go, for instance, to the essay on Voltaire, less to learn something definite about the subject of the sketch than to discover how Voltairism is interpreted by Carlyle. Nor is the interest merely curious or personal. Here two great schools of thought are brought into conflict. It is one of the many little combats in a tremendous world battle between gods and jötuns.

Out of this warfare against materialism and skepticism Carlyle was to emerge in later years scarred and battle-stained. But the time of active conflict was naturally preceded by a period largely devoted to assimilation and preparation. As all modern men of wide reading must be, Carlyle was an eclectic, and in his early writing we constantly see him culling ideas wherever he can find them and appropriating them as his own. He was grateful to these masters of his thought, and, whether men of profound

genius like Goethe and Fichte, or smaller men like Tieck and Novalis, he was ever ready to give them their full due. In the early books and essays, therefore, we are able to see him in the very process of selecting and arranging the component ideas of his philosophy. The present essay is an endeavor to render clearer the stages of this process. While not attempting an exhaustive investigation of the influences at work on Carlyle's mind, or the sources of his ideas or of his style, it is hoped that this study will show more clearly than has yet been shown what were the materials of thought accumulated before the publication of *Sartor Resartus* and destined to furnish the solid substructure of all his later work, and how this material was taking an increasingly distinct shape as he proceeded.

Carlyle first becomes articulate for us in the year 1814, when at the age of eighteen we find him carrying on an active correspondence with a young friend, Robert Mitchell of Linlithgow. The Carlyle of these early letters discloses himself as an earnest and high-minded young man, with a strong sense of responsibility and a turn

for giving good advice. Though the letters of these years furnish little evidence of original literary genius, it is clear that he has already made upon his friends the impression of personal power. His intense earnestness sometimes displays itself in a vaulting ambition to "make some fellows stand to the right and left," and at other times in the serious conviction that "a man's dignity in the great system of which he forms a part is exactly proportional to his moral and intellectual attainments."

It is well known that much of Carlyle's early interest centered about the study of mathematics. It is perhaps not so clearly recognized that this interest was not that of the prize mathematician of the college, who delights in the exercise and display of mental acuteness, but arose from the serious desire to pursue truth under whatever guise it presented itself. This is clear both from the letters and from *Wotton Reinfred*. Carlyle desires "to see these truths" and "to feel them." Wotton devotes himself to the study of mathematics until he becomes satisfied that it offers no satisfactory solution of the mystery of life. It was inevitable,

therefore, that Carlyle should turn from mathematics to philosophy. The first recorded literary project is an "essay upon natural religion," and about the same time we find him reading Voltaire, "the most impudent, blaspheming, libidinous blackguard that ever lived," Dugald Stewart, Hume, Gibbon, and the Stoic philosophers.

It was the reading of Mme. de Staël's *Germany* in September, 1817, that led Carlyle to the study of German literature. Six months later we find him taking lessons in German, and by 1821 he is deep in Schiller and Kant, Schelling and Fichte. By July of the latter year he has himself tasted of "the magic cup of literature" and resolved to "drink of it forever, though bitter ingredients enough be mixed with the liquor."

Of the early literary projects the most interesting belong to the year 1822. One of these is a "kind of essay on the Civil Wars (of) the Commonwealth of England," an interesting anticipation in its plan of the most striking features of Carlyle's historical method, according to which the biography of great men is used to interpret the truly typical in national character, and the whole is

used to expound a personal philosophy.[a] In December he proposes to Miss Welsh a still more interesting project, the writing of a novel in collaboration. The hero was to be a disappointed young man of genius in circumstances resembling Carlyle's own. "Sick of struggling along the sordid bustle of existence, where he could glean so little enjoyment but found so much acute suffering," he was to wander discontentedly over the hill country, musing and meditating and occasionally delivering his opinions "upon many points of science, literature and morals." As his mental malady increased he was to speak forth his sufferings "with a tongue of fire—sharp, sarcastic, apparently unfeeling, yet all the while betokening to the quick-sighted a mind of lofty thoughts and generous affections smarting under the torments of its own over-nobleness, and ready to break in pieces by the force of its own energies." This is the moment of entrance for the heroine, that is, for Miss Welsh, who rescues him from his state of despond-

a In 1898 Alexander Carlyle edited a series of *Historical Sketches,* written by Carlyle about 1842 and 1843, a partial fulfillment of the plan outlined in 1822.

ency. "The earth again grows green beneath his feet, his soul recovers all its fiery energies, he is prepared to front death and danger, to wrestle with devils and men, that he may gain your favor. For a while you laugh at him, but at length take pity on the poor fellow, and grow as serious as he is. Then, oh then! what a more than elysian prospect! But alas! Fate, etc., obstacles, etc., etc. You are both broken-hearted, and die; and the whole closes with a mortcloth, and Mr. Trotter and a company of undertakers."

Although Carlyle soon abandoned this project ("your novel-love has become a perfect drug"), it was destined to bud a few years later, frost-nipped to be sure, in *Wotton Reinfred*, and to come to fruition at last in the biographical portion of *Sartor Resartus*. Of the other writings before 1826 all partake more or less of the nature of hackwork. Besides the encyclopedia articles written for Dr. Brewster, these are the *Life of Schiller*, written in 1823 and 1824, the translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, undertaken about the same time, and the translations for the volume of *German*

Romance, apparently begun in November, 1825, and finished in June, 1826. On October 17, Carlyle and Miss Welsh were married in the bride's home in Templand. His period of hackwork and his unmarried life ended together.

The seven years from 1819 to 1826 while Carlyle had been struggling to find a place for himself in the field of letters had been in other ways perhaps the most crucial of his life. Dyspepsia and doubt had joined forces to bring him torment, and the first three years of this period are those which he has described as "the three most miserable years of my life." The famous conversion or "new birth" had taken place in June, 1821, but the victory was not completed until 1826, when "the final chaining down, trampling home 'for good,' home into their caves for ever of all my spiritual dragons" was at last accomplished. Even more distressing than his religious doubts was the lack of certainty as to his own usefulness. "The thought that one's best days are hurrying darkly and uselessly away" seems to have been the most grievous of all his burdens.

In the meanwhile he is not entirely absorbed in the internal struggle. In 1819 for the first time we find him taking a lively interest in social problems. The letters from this time on contain little pictures of the pathos and tragedy in the lives of the poor and oppressed as they revealed themselves to this thoughtful young Scotchman of a century ago, with his hungry heart, his ready sympathy and no less ready contempt, and his Faustian thirst for a deeper knowledge of the meaning of life. We see him at the time of the Radical rising in Glasgow overtaking an old peasant and eagerly discussing with him the rights of the people and the poverty and misery of the working classes; or visiting the iron and coal works at Birmingham and expressing his pity for grimy and naked humanity "plashing about among dripping caverns, or scrambling amid heaps of broken mineral; and thirsting unquenchably for beer"; or turning into the Morgue at Paris to see the naked body of "an old gray-headed artisan whom misery had driven to drown himself in the river." The young observer notes the "grim fixed look of despair," the "lean,

horny hands with their long ragged nails," and "the patched and soiled apparel with apron and sabots hanging at his head," and, already keenly alive to the value of contrast, throws the whole against the background of noisy life streaming along the *Pont Neuf*. A letter from London two months later presents a similarly striking picture of that "enormous Babel," with its "coaches and wains and sheep and oxen and wild people rushing on with bellowings and shrieks and thundering din, as if the earth in general were gone distracted." There is in all this perhaps too preponderant an interest in the strikingly spectacular, too keen a desire to throw the picture of the gray-headed artisan into sharp contrast with the quacking, sharping, racketing multitude, too little of that yearning human compassion which makes possible a *Bridge of Sighs* or a *Little Dorrit*. There is, however, a note of noble indignation against wrong and oppression, premonitory of *Chartism* and of *Past and Present*.

That Carlyle's sense of consecration to a high purpose was growing in him during this period is evident from the tone of many letters. Carlyle has frequently been accused

of egoism, and he cannot, I think, be wholly cleared of this charge. In spite of his conviction of the necessity of renunciation he never really learned the lesson of self-effacement. Like Ruskin, he was filled with wrath and disappointment at England for paying so little heed to his most vehement warnings. A touch of spiritual pride that occasionally approaches Pharisaism now and then offends us. Yet, on the whole, he was, I believe, a man of true humility and true sympathy; and to compare him, as a writer has recently done, to the Japanese Thunder-god who leers and lashes at humanity with no real compassion for it in his heart, is grossly unjust. Carlyle began with aggressive egoism, but he soon realized that life made nobler demands upon him than those of personal ambition. In February, 1825, he writes to Alexander Carlyle: "Literary fame is a thing which I covet little; but I desire to be *working* honestly in my day and generation in this business, which has now become my trade." "Do not imagine," he writes to Miss Welsh in January, 1823, "that I make no account of a glorious name: I think it is the best of *external* rewards,

but never to be set in competition with those that lie within."

Finally, the letters written toward the close of this period reveal a tremendously increased power of expression. The vision is clearer, the penetration deeper, the language more poetical. The man has seen more widely, felt more deeply, lived more earnestly. Though he has not yet gained the power of expressing his whole mind in any completed work of art, many letters show that in single passages he has learned how to bring all his faculties, pictorial and reflective, to bear. Along with this goes a deepening of the sense of mystery. Even in the midst of hackwork he has begun to voyage strange seas of thought alone, to see in an ancient Scotch city the beauty of "a city of fairy-land," in St. Paul's Cathedral the solemnity of "Tadmor in the wilderness," and to find that a hidden mystery lies behind every simplest fact of life and of death, "could man outlook that mark."

Carlyle began his married life at 21 Comley Bank, Edinburgh, where he lived from October, 1826, until May, 1828. From the latter year until after the publication of

Sartor Resartus in 1834 his home was the lonely farmhouse of Craigenputtock. The period of apprenticeship, however, may be said to have been completed by the end of 1831. The writings of these years include nineteen of the *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, the unfinished novel of *Wotton Reinfred*, and *Sartor Resartus*. The more important essays are the two on Richter, *The State of German Literature*, *Burns*, *Goethe*, *Voltaire*, *Novalis*, *Signs of the Times*, *History*, *Schiller*, and *Characteristics*.[a] None of these can properly be termed hackwork. They are written with spirit and originality and constitute an important part of Carlyle's literary output. In *Sartor* he found for himself a true medium of expression, and with the completion of this book by the middle of 1831, and the publication of *Characteristics* in the same year, the period of literary apprenticeship has come to a close.

The novel of *Wotton Reinfred* was begun about the end of January, 1827.[b] Its title

a See Bibliographical Note.

b On February 3 Carlyle says, "Last week, too, I fairly began . . . . a book."

is first mentioned in March of the same year. On June 4 we hear that "poor Wotton has prospered but indifferently . . . . though daily on the anvil," and the last passing mention of it is on February 1, 1828, at which time it had apparently not yet been abandoned. Mr. Norton quotes from an unpublished manuscript of Carlyle's written in 1869, to the effect that "the work proved to be a dreary *zero*, and went wholly to the fire." The seven completed chapters were, however, left among Carlyle's papers at his death, and were published by D. Appleton & Company in 1892. The story of the publication of *Sartor* has been told more than once and need not be repeated here. Begun about September, 1830, it was finished, revised and expanded by July, 1831, when Carlyle set off for London to find a publisher. After its rejection it was laid aside without change in the text until November, 1833, when it began to appear in *Fraser's Magazine*.

In the meanwhile the published reviews were attracting considerable attention. Their author was beginning to be talked about and even to gather a little band of disciples. He

writes from Edinburgh in 1827 that the people seem to think him "a genius perhaps, but of what sort Heaven only knows." He is regarded rather to his own satisfaction as a mystic. A parcel from the Société St.-Simonienne in Paris after the publication of *Signs of the Times*, a conversation with a certain Mrs. Austin, whom he describes as "the most enthusiastic of German Mystics," and the visit of "a young man, Coke, from Norwich," the bearer of a letter from a little band of "Disciplekins," are small encouragements. Three months later Mill introduces him to a "fresh lot of youths" who seek his acquaintance.

All this impresses more and more upon him the readiness and necessity for administering some sort of "medicinal assafœtida" to the "pudding-stomach of England." Much jangling concerning that "everlasting 'Catholic question'" and the Reform Bill reaches his ears even at Craigenputtock, but sounds somewhat vain there. To one whose "Seed-field is Time" the proper relation toward all this seems "that chiefly of Spectator."[a] Nevertheless, he is not indifferent to

a Letter to Dr. Carlyle, June 6, 1831.

the actual state of English society in his own day. His Journal for February, 1829, records his desire above all things to know England and "the essence of the social life" there, and the jottings of this and the following year contain many reflections on social questions.[a] He is, in fact, interested in all that pertains to the life of his time, but it is rather the inner than the outer man with whom he is concerned. The "Mechanism" of Whigs, and Lord Advocates, and "unspeakably gabbling Parliamenteers and Pulpiteers" offends him: "one spark of Dynamism, of Inspiration, were it in the poorest soul, is stronger than they all" (Craigenputtock, March 4, 1831). He is resolved that he at least shall sit no longer "mute as milestone, while Quacks of every description are quacking as with lungs of brass," even though "poor Teufelsdreck" stands unsupported in such resistance. After the failure to get *Sartor* printed, he contemplates for a while the possibility of lecturing to "this benighted multitude,"

a The extracts of the journal of 1829-1830, which form Chapter 4 of Froude's second volume, contain many passages afterwards incorporated with changes in *Sartor Resartus.*

whose "gross groping ignorance" is becoming more and more evident to him.

Carlyle's spiritual condition at the beginning of this period and his fitness to deliver a message of affirmation are indicated in a letter to Goethe (August 20, 1827):

"As it is, your works have been a mirror to me; unasked and unhoped for, your wisdom has counselled me; and so peace and health of soul have visited me from afar. For I was once an Unbeliever, not in Religion only, but in all the Mercy and Beauty of which it is the symbol; storm-tossed in my own imaginations; a man divided from men; exasperated, wretched, driven almost to despair; so that Faust's wild *curse* seemed the only fit greeting for human life; and his passionate *Fluch vor allen der Geduld!* was spoken from my very inmost heart. But now, thank Heaven, all this is altered; without change of external circumstances, solely by the new light which rose upon me, I attained to new thoughts, and a composure which I should have once considered as impossible. And now, under happier omens, though the bodily health which I lost in these struggles has never been and may

never be restored to me, I look forward with cheerfulness to a life spent in Literature, with such fortune and such strength as may be granted me; hoping little and fearing little from the world; having learned that what I once called Happiness is not only not to be attained on Earth, but not even to be desired."

The conviction that "the root of bitterness in the bottom of our cup" cannot be removed had slowly forced itself upon him and had now become an integral part of his philosophy. "Happy he who learns to drink it without wincing!" he says in a letter to Alexander Carlyle, written in January, 1827. "Happier and wiser who can see that in this very bitterness there is a medicine for his Soul." The renunciation of happiness demands either resignation or revolt and bitterness of spirit. Carlyle chose the former. "Humility is no mean feeling, but the highest, and only one; the *denial of Self* it is, and therein is the beginning of all that is truly generous and noble" (January, 1831). "He who has seen into the high meaning of 'ENTSAGEN,'" he writes to Goethe, "cherishes even here a still Faith in quite

another Future than the vulgar devotee believes, or the vulgar sceptic denies."

To believe in the goodness of life, yet to disbelieve in the possibility of earthly happiness, is in itself a high act of faith. With Carlyle it was based upon the belief that "Life is but a Shadow and a Show," and that "the Substance and the Truth lies beyond it." More and more the actual world about him was coming to seem to him spectral and unreal. "Man walks on the very brink of unfathomable abysses always," he writes to his brother John, and to his mother: "This mad Existence . . . . I look upon rather as a heavy Dream, wherefrom, when the night is passed, we shall awaken to a fair Morning." The disregard of fame and worldly ambition, and "the search and declaration" of the invisible truth, the honest striving "after the Idea," is from this time on to become his steadfast purpose. Diligence, "like the stars unhasting, unresting,"[a] the pursuit of Truth, recognized as priceless, and the avoidance of Dilettanteism, the endeavor to make of oneself a man, and not only "another money-gaining and money-spend-

[a] Goethe's "ohne Hast, aber ohne Rast."

ing machine," these are the counsels that he is giving to others and striving himself to follow.[a] "Not the quantity of Pleasure we have had, but the quantity of Victory we have gained, of Labor we have overcome: that is the happiness of Life."

a See the letter to Mr. Henry Inglis, March 31, 1829.

I

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

To make anything like a complete exposition of Carlyle's philosophy would lead us far beyond the bounds of the present undertaking. Besides, it has been done, or at least been attempted with greater or less success, not once but several times.[a] It is our purpose here merely to sketch rapidly the successive appearances of his more important philosophical tenets.

Carlyle's first mention of Kant in the letters is in 1820. He began reading the transcendental philosophers soon after. In 1825, at the time of the appearance of the *Schiller*, he was looking to them with hope, though without any extravagant expectations, for that solution of the mystery of life for which his whole soul ardently longed. "The Philosophy of Kant is probably combined with errors to its very core; but perhaps also, this ponderous, unmanageable

a See, for instance, *The Philosophy of Carlyle*, by Edwin D. Mead, Boston, 1881.

dross may bear in it the everlasting gold of truth." By this time he had already parted with a belief in orthodox Christianity, he had decided against the possibility of miraculous interference with the laws of nature, but his reverent and enthusiastic temperament demanded some expression in religious belief. The grounds for such faith he had been unable to find in the English and Scotch philosophers. He had toiled conscientiously over Dugald Stewart, and had read eagerly the works of Locke and Hume. But the lack of clear penetration in the one, and the materialism and skepticism of the other two offended him. The Germans, on the other hand, seemed to hold the key to the situation, at any rate they seemed to approach the problem from the right direction. That all phenomena, when traced far enough, end in mystery, is indisputable. That this mysterious life is spiritual rather than mechanical in its origin and its essence, is at least impossible to disprove. That not merely occasional, but that all phenomena, are accordingly to be looked upon as miraculous in the sense that they are mysterious, inexplicable, and worthy of reverence, is a

justifiable and even lofty doctrine. These are the chief tenets which Carlyle found expressed for him in German Transcendentalism, and which accordingly he appropriated as his own.

That none of these fundamental beliefs or habits of mind is new, that they are all to be found, for instance, in the book of *Job*, does not make Carlyle's debt to the Germans the less. What Transcendentalism did for him was to persuade him that these beliefs are still reasonable to a modern man, that they are not inconsistent with the latest discoveries of science, and that they may be deduced by the most strict and logical methods known to the best equipped modern mind. In other words, Kant translated the language of the Bible and of Plato into the modern tongue.

In the first essay on Richter this philosophy, as modified by the individual mind of the novelist, is just mentioned. Richter's philosophy is deemed noteworthy in that it is not mechanical or skeptical, that in spite of disregard of dogma and apparent irreverence it is at bottom profoundly reverent and religious; that it clings fast to faith in man's

immortality and native grandeur, and that this faith is joined with that love of truth which leads through doubt and denial before it reaches affirmation. This is the only sort of faith possible to the noble modern mind.

Carlyle's first attempt to present in any adequate way the more important conclusions of the transcendentalists occurs in the essay on *The State of German Literature.* The Germans have been accused of mysticism. It is in answer to this charge that Carlyle examines the philosophy which has so profoundly influenced both their formal thought and their imaginative literature. The charge of mysticism arises, he believes, either from the inability of the reader to follow abstract discussion which cannot be set forth through the use of ordinary symbols, or from the inability of the writer, "seized by some touch of divine Truth," to convey his meaning through the rude symbols at his command. Of mysticism in the latter sense Kant with his strong, clear quality of vision cannot justly be accused.

Carlyle does not pretend to have mastered the philosophy which he here partially expounds. He still professes to be only an

inquirer on the outskirts of the matter, but zealous to prove to Englishmen that there is matter worthy of investigation. It can hardly be said that he ever became much more than this. He seized upon those doctrines which naturally appealed to his own type of mind and gave them prominence.

Of these he selects in this place two of primary importance. They are, first: that Primitive Truth, the assumption upon which philosophy must build, is not to be found in the experience of sense, but through the faculty of intuition, "in the deepest and purest nature of Man." God, Virtue, the Soul, are not to be proved but to be assumed, for no other truth is so primitive or so certain. "To open the inward eye to the sight of this Primitively True," which, when rightly discerned, will need no further proof, is then the true task of philosophy.

The second doctrine asserts the existence of a special faculty by which this Primitive Truth may be discerned. The distinction between the Understanding and the Reason (*Verstand and Vernunft*) Carlyle calls "the grand characteristic of Kant's philosophy." Both Understanding and Reason are organs,

or modes of operation, by which the mind discovers truth. Reason, however, deals with Truth itself, Understanding only with relations; Understanding moves in the domain of logic and argument; Reason in the higher realm of Poetry and Virtue. Man's spiritual welfare depends in large measure upon the subordination of the Understanding to the Reason. Much of the merit of this philosophy lies in its moral loftiness and its religious depth. The German literature, inspired by it consciously or unconsciously, "breathes a spirit of devoutness and elevation," and its greatest thinkers, men like Fichte, possess a rare moral grandeur. The description of this "cold, colossal, adamantine spirit, standing erect and clear, like a Cato Major among degenerate men," is well known.

The distinction between the Understanding and the Reason affords Carlyle throughout the essays a criterion for judging eminent men. As in the realm of poetry, so in that of philosophy Goethe and Voltaire are contrasted types. With Voltaire Understanding is supreme. He sees no mystery or majesty in heaven or earth; "his sub-

limest Apocalypse of Nature lies in the microscope and telescope; the Earth is a place for producing corn; the Starry Heavens are admirable as a nautical timekeeper."[a] This constitutes the ground of his inferiority to Goethe, who dwells in the realm of Reason. The same superiority in less degree belongs to other Germans, to Schiller, to Richter, and to Novalis.

In the essay on the last named writer Carlyle once more undertakes to expound to some extent the transcendental philosophy. We have again the distinction between the absolute existence of spirit and the relative existence of matter. "To a Transcendentalist matter has an existence, but only as a Phenomenon; were *we* not there neither would it be there; it is a mere Relation, or rather the result of a Relation between our living Souls and the great First Cause; and depends for its apparent qualities on *our* bodily and mental organs; having itself *no* intrinsic qualities; being, in the common sense of that word, Nothing."

Carlyle proceeds next to explain the Kantian doctrine of subjectivity of Space and

a *Voltaire.*

Time, and then repeats the distinction made in the earlier essay between the Understanding and the Reason. In his discussion of these ideas and of the application made of them by Novalis we come upon many of the phrases familiar to the readers of *Sartor*. The material Creation is "an Appearance, a typical shadow in which the Deity manifests himself to Man"; it is "a show"; "Sound and Smoke overclouding 'the Splendour of Heaven'"; it is "the veil and mysterious Garment of the Unseen"; the earth and its glories are a "vapour and a Dream."

This idealism may be universally applied. In accordance with its mode of thought the physical universe is to be looked upon as a garment of Deity; the Visible Church is only the outward mechanism of the Invisible Church; society is governed by a Social Idea:

"Every Society, every Polity, has a spiritual principle; is the embodiment, tentative and more or less complete, of an Idea; all its tendencies of endeavor, specialties of custom, its laws, politics and whole procedure (as the glance of some Montesquieu, across innumerable superficial entangle-

ments, can partly decipher), are prescribed by an Idea, and flow naturally from it, as movements from the living source of motion. This Idea, be it of devotion to a man or class of men, to a creed, to an institution, or even, as in more ancient times, to a piece of land, is ever a true Loyalty; has in it something of a religious, paramount, quite infinite character; it is properly the Soul of the State, its Life, mysterious as other forms of Life, and like these working secretly, and in a depth beyond that of consciousness."[a]

In the novel of *Wotton Reinfred* the mystic philosopher Dalbrook, whom Leslie Stephen identifies with Coleridge, is the champion of the transcendental philosophy. Incapable of action and without unity in himself, he is an ardent seeker of truth and a worshipper of the invisible. A single passage on Truth, spoken by Dalbrook, may be quoted for the sake of its characteristic quality and its intrinsic beauty:

" 'It is expressed oftener than it is listened to or comprehended,' said the other in reply; 'for our ears are heavy, and the divine harmony of the spheres is drowned in the

a *Characteristics.*

gross, harsh dissonance of earthly things. Expressed? In the expiring smile of martyrs; in the actions of a Howard and a Cato; in the still existence of all good men. Echoes of it come to us from the song of the poet; the sky with its azure and its rainbow and its beautiful vicissitudes of morn and even shows it forth; the earth also with her floods and everlasting Alps, the ocean with its tempests and its calms. It is an open secret, but we have no clear vision for it: woe to us if we have no vision at all!' "

It is a somewhat curious fact that Carlyle's first important discussion of an ethical problem occurs in the little-read essay on *The Life and Writings of Werner*. The doctrines are not yet set forth boldly as Carlyle's own, but presented merely as the creed of a mystical German dramatist. Many pages of confused and cloudy character had to be waded through before this creed could be ascertained. When, however, we do reach the conclusion we find that it agrees with the decision which Carlyle himself was slowly forming during these years. Under the mythuses of Phosphoros and Baffometus, in the latter of which we recognize the "Bapho-

metic Fire-Baptism" of *Sartor*, Carlyle finds figured his own doctrine of resignation.

"His [Werner's] fundamental principle of morals we have seen in part already: it does not exclusively or primarily belong to himself; being little more than that high tenet of entire Self-forgetfulness, that 'merging of the *Me* in the *Idea*'; a principle which reigns both in Stoical and Christian ethics, and is at this day common, in theory, among all German philosophers, especially of the Transcendental class. Werner has adopted this principle with his whole heart and his whole soul, as the indispensable condition of all Virtue. . . . . He will not have Happiness, under any form, to be the real or chief end of man: this is but love of enjoyment, disguise it as we like; and a more complex and sometimes more respectable species of hunger, he would say; to be admitted as an indestructible element in human nature, but nowise to be recognized as the highest; on the contrary, to be resisted and incessantly warred with, till it become obedient to love of God, which is only, in the truest sense, love of Goodness, and the germ of which lies deep in the inmost nature of man; of author-

ity superior to all sensitive impulses; forming, in fact, the grand law of his being, as subjection to it forms the first and last condition of spiritual health. He thinks that to propose a reward for virtue is to render virtue impossible. He warmly seconds Schleiermacher in declaring that even the hope of Immortality is a consideration unfit to be introduced into religion, and tending only to pervert it, and impair its sacredness."

It will be recognized that here we have all the essential elements of Carlyle's ethics as set forth in the second book of *Sartor Resartus*.

The same ethical idea runs through the great essay on Burns. But here it is no longer hesitatingly uttered as the creed of another, but set forth in words of burning conviction.

"We become men, not after we have been dissipated, and disappointed in the chase of false pleasure; but after we have ascertained, in any way, what impassable barriers hem us in through this life; how mad it is to hope for contentment to our infinite soul from the *gifts* of this extremely finite world; that

a man must be sufficient for himself; and that for suffering and enduring there is no remedy but striving and doing. Manhood begins when we have in any way made truce with Necessity; begins even when we have surrendered to Necessity, as the most part only do; but begins joyfully and hopefully only when we have reconciled ourselves to Necessity; and thus, in reality, triumphed over it, and felt that in Necessity we are free."

Carlyle finds Burns' inferiority to men like Locke and Milton and Cervantes in his inability to attain to their condition of self-forgetfulness. These men were not "self-seekers and self-worshippers," they had another object than personal enjoyment; they counted it "blessedness to spend and be spent" in the service of that "Invisible Goodness, which alone is man's reasonable service."

Still more clearly anticipatory of the familiar passages in *Sartor* is the discussion of the "Happiness-question" in the essay on Schiller. Carlyle's argument is that, although we recognize the fact that the gross are happier than the refined, we would still

be unwilling to change places with them. His position in regard to the whole matter is nowhere stated more clearly than in this essay.

"If Happiness mean Welfare, there is no doubt but all men should and must pursue their Welfare, that is to say, pursue what is worthy of their pursuit. But if, on the other hand, Happiness mean, as for most men it does, 'agreeable sensations,' Enjoyment refined or not, then must we observe that there *is* a doubt; or rather that there is a certainty the other way. Strictly considered, this truth, that man has in him something higher than a Love of Pleasure, take Pleasure in what sense you will, has been the text of all true Teachers and Preachers since the beginning of the world; and in one or another dialect, we may hope, will continue to be preached and taught till the world end."

Wotton Reinfred opens characteristically with a discussion of the question of happiness, Wotton contending that happiness "if it be the aim was never meant to be the *end* of our being." The subject is resumed in a later chapter. Various ideas familiar to the

reader of Carlyle are brought forward, that happiness is dependent upon stupidity and "an excellent nervous system"; that unhappiness would be less if we ceased to demand that to which we have no proper claim; that "our highest, our only real blessedness lies in this very warfare with evil"; that not happiness, but the disinterested pursuit of virtue is man's highest wish. This leads naturally to the question of self-interest as a motive for conduct and its rejection together with all other motives "in that sense of the word motive." The germ of the theory of unconsciousness later elaborated in the essay called *Characteristics* is to be found in a sentence in the same paragraph: "The virtue we are conscious of is no right virtue."

That the best answer to all such problems is to be found in the right performance of duty and that "the end of man is an action, not a thought," is a conclusion reached early in the book. "It is a poor philosophy which can be taught in words: we talk and talk; and talking without acting, though Socrates were the speaker, does not help our case but aggravate it. Thou must act, thou must work, thou must do! Collect thyself, com-

pose thyself, find what is wanting that so tortures thee; do but attempt with all thy strength to attain it and thou art saved."

Throughout the period of the early essays we may say, I think, with confidence, that this principle of Self-Annihilation, or Resignation, involving the renunciation of happiness on the one hand and devotion to some higher ideal on the other, constitutes Carlyle's most important ethical teaching. In addition to this he lays chief emphasis upon reverence and sincerity as leading virtues.

Reverence for that which is higher and nobler than ourselves is the beginning of wisdom. Carlyle's chief debt to Goethe was the lesson that reverence was still possible for all men. The chief fault in Voltaire's constitution was the lack of the feeling of reverence. All manifestations of the spirit, all evidences of the invisible Goodness, should inspire in us this feeling. Especially is this true of the highest manifestation of all, the life of a spiritually gifted man. Such men are "Illuminated Characters" in the Book of Life, "Hieroglyphs of a true Sacred Writing," "mystic windows through which we glance deeper into the hidden ways of

Nature."[a] The doctrine of Hero-Worship is not prominent in the early essays, does not become so until the criticism of Croker's Edition of Boswell's *Johnson* in 1832, but it finds occasional expression. Burns' visit to Edinburgh is an illustration of it. Voltaire's final visit to Paris is highly significant of the reverence paid to wisdom or the show of it. "Only to spiritual worth can the spirit do reverence; only in a soul deeper and better than ours can we see any heavenly mystery, and in humbling ourselves feel ourselves exalted. . . . . We rejoice to see and know that such a principle exists perennially in man's inmost bosom; that there is no heart so sunk and stupefied, none so withered and pampered, but the felt presence of a nobler heart will inspire it and lead it captive."

Sincerity, as Carlyle later elaborated the idea, came to mean not only honesty of purpose, but vision and sympathy; a power to see through appearance into reality, a dwelling in the Truth of things, a living in the Divine Idea. The inculcation of this virtue, frequently reiterated in Carlyle's later work,

a These familiar phrases first occur in the article on Peter Nimmo in *Fraser's Magazine,* February, 1831.

is less prominent in the early period. In the essay on Burns, however, he finds it, "the root of most other virtues, literary as well as moral." Burns' chief excellence is "his *Sincerity*, his indisputable air of Truth." "Let a man but speak forth with genuine earnestness the thought, the emotion, the actual condition of his own heart; and other men, so strangely are we all knit together by the tie of sympathy, must and will give heed to him."

Carlyle's religion, as visible to us in the early essays, is neither dogmatic and ecclesiastical, nor vaguely benevolent and humanitarian. It is not allied with theology on the one hand or with socialism on the other. It has been called pantheistic, but pantheism is a vague term and may mean anything or nothing. Religion for Carlyle consisted in a clear perception of, and a deep reverence for, what he calls the Divine Idea of the World. The perception everywhere of a divine power and presence, manifest in the moving of the stars and in the smallest blade of grass, through which as through a window man may look into the infinite, the recognition of the miraculous in what men

are pleased to call the common, and of the supernatural in the natural, these are its essential modes. The truly religious temperament is described in Tieck's comment on Novalis, for whom "it had become the most natural disposition to regard the commonest and nearest as a wonder, and the strange, the supernatural as something common; man's every-day life itself lay round him like a wondrous fable, and those regions which the most dream of or doubt of as of a thing distant, incomprehensible, were for him a beloved home." Such perception and recognition of the divine about us is possible only to profound spirits, gifted with the powers of love, reverence and insight. It will be seen in the following section that these are the very faculties which Carlyle has demanded also of the true poet. It may be inferred, therefore, that the true poet and the truly religious man are one and the same, except perhaps in faculty of expression. This is indeed Carlyle's belief. Poetry "is but another form of Wisdom, of Religion; is itself Wisdom and Religion."[a]

Religion, then, is not to be identified with

a *Burns.*

its forms. These are, as he quotes approvingly from Richter, but "the Ethnic Forecourt of the Invisible Temple" which constitutes the true church. In the essay on Werner the idea is further elaborated:

"It is a common theory among the Germans that every Creed, every Form of worship, is a *form* merely; the mortal and everchanging *body*, in which the immortal and unchanging *spirit* of Religion is, with more or less completeness, expressed to the material eye, and made manifest and influential among the doings of men." The figure of the Phœnix as "shadowing forth the history of his own Faith," used by Carlyle in *Sartor* as the emblem of the history of all religion, is borrowed from Werner.

In the figure of the Phœnix two ideas are implicit: first, the distinction in religion between the spirit or reality and the forms or phenomena; and second, the evolutionary idea, the unchanging spirit of religion being thought of as passing through continuous metamorphosis of perishable forms. To this idea Carlyle applies the Kantian distinction between the Understanding and the Reason, the forms of religion being in the province

of the former and its spirit in that of the latter. Men, therefore, who allow their Understanding to master their Reason cannot by any possibility be religious men, since they are sure to place the forms or the practical benefits of religion above its mysterious spirit. This is the trouble with the Benthams and the Paleys as well as the Voltaires. Voltaire, indeed, spent his whole strength in battling, if not quite ineffectually, at any rate with an entire misunderstanding of the situation. "That the Christian Religion could have any deeper foundation than Books, could possibly be written in the purest nature of man, in mysterious, ineffaceable characters, to which Books, and all Revelations, and authentic traditions, were but a subsidiary matter, were but as the *light* by which that divine *writing* was to be read;—nothing of this seems to have, even in the faintest manner, occurred to him."

It follows from what has already been said that the Christian Religion is to be thought of as simply one form, though immeasurably the highest, of the universal spirit of religion. To compare it, however,

as superior, inferior or equal to, any other form is to hit beside the mark, since it differs from such forms in its entire nature, "as a perfect Ideal Poem does from a correct computation in Arithmetic." To exactly define its nature is also impossible. Something of its divine character may, however, be suggested in such phrases as *Humility*, or the "Sanctuary of Sorrow," or may be symbolized by some such parable as that of the Three Reverences in *Wilhelm Meister*, to which Carlyle makes reference in the essay on Goethe, in *Sartor*, and in the Edinburgh *Address* of 1866.

"But now we have to speak of the Third Religion, grounded on Reverence for what is Under us: this we name the Christian; as in the Christian Religion such a temper is the most distinctly manifested: it is a last step to which mankind was fitted and destined to attain. But what a task was it, not only to be patient with the Earth, and let it lie beneath us, we appealing to a higher birthplace; but also to recognize humility and poverty, mockery and despite, disgrace and wretchedness, suffering and death, to recognize these things as divine; nay, even

on sin and crime to look not as hindrances, but to honor and love them as furtherances, of what is holy."[a]

The essence of the Christian Religion resides then in its spirit of humility, reverence and self-denial. "Enlightened self-interest," which is advanced by the French *Philosophes* and the English Utilitarians as a sufficient guide for conduct will prove a "dim hornlantern" hardly able to keep mankind from stumbling into quagmires. As self-denial is the primary virtue, so we may say, with apologies to Matthew Arnold, that self-denial, "touched with emotion," is, in Carlyle's opinion, the heart of the Christian Religion.

a Quoted from *Meister's Travels* in the essay on *Goethe.*

II

THEORIES OF POETRY

"Divine philosophy" wrought into noble poetical expression and breathing a lofty and devout character seemed ever to Carlyle as "musical as is Apollo's lute," but mere versification, the thin piping of feeble poetasters, aroused in him only contempt. Until after the completion of *Sartor* he looked upon himself primarily as a literary critic, and though interest in purely literary matters seemed increasingly less vital to him in his later work, the distinction formulated in the early essays between true poetry and manufactured verse continued to be for him a valid one. Even in the early years, however, he seems occasionally to have wavered in his faith, or to have forgotten his own distinction. In his journal for January, 1830, he speaks of poetry as "the jingle of maudlin persons" and adds: "My greatly most delightful reading is when some Goethe musically *teaches* me."

The italics show where Carlyle's chief emphasis lies. In the essay on Goethe, the function of poetry is declared to be the revelation of the "inward and essential Truth in Art" and in *Early German Literature* the poet is defined as "he who, not indeed by mechanical but by poetical methods, can instruct us, can more and more evolve for us the mystery of our own life." Undoubtedly Carlyle here overemphasizes the teaching function, which is hardly the primary essential in poetry. Not to expound, but to illuminate, not to explain the nature of beauty and truth, but to convey us into the region of beauty and truth, to make us sharers in these things, this is what the best poetry does for us.

A more vital discussion of the subject occurs in the *State of German Literature.* Here the purpose of poetry is separated not only from that of amusement and sensation, but from utility also. It is to be loved for itself "not because it is useful for spiritual pleasure, or even for moral culture, but because it is Art, and the highest in man, and the soul of all Beauty." "It dwells and is born in the inmost Spirit of Man," it is

one with love of Virtue and true belief in God, "another phase of the same highest principle in the mysterious infinitude of the human Soul." This is perhaps Carlyle's most satisfactory discussion of the subject. William Morris was wont to say that the customary talk about inspiration as the origin of poetry was nonsense, and that poetical creation is a matter of craftsmanship alone. Carlyle's view differs radically and fundamentally from this. For him, as for Wordsworth, it is "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge," coming, one knows not how, from the mysterious depths of man's nature and without regard to theory or discernible law.

More objectively considered, poetry is to be looked upon as the interpretation of that Divine Idea or spiritual reality of which the visible Universe is but the "symbol and sensible manifestation." In this invisible the poet lives and has his being. "Life with its prizes and its failures, its tumult and its jarring din, were a poor matter in itself; to him it is baseless, transient and hollow, an infant's dream; but beautiful also, and solemn and of mysterious significance. Why

should he not love it and reverence it? Is not all visible nature, all sensible existence the symbol and vesture of the Invisible and Infinite?"[a]

In the greatest poets of the nineteenth century the actual aspects of life, with its meanness, barrenness and skepticism, are sharply delineated, yet at the same time its "secret significance is laid open," its beauty and its spiritual meaning. The poet teaches us, therefore, at the same time to know the world and to love it. "All is hollowness, and insufficiency, and sin and woe are there; but with them, nay by them do beauty and mercy and a solemn grandeur shine forth, and man with his stinted and painful existence is no longer little or poor, but lovely and venerable; for a glory of Infinitude is round him; and it is by his very poverty that he is rich, and by his littleness that he is great."[b]

For such revelation of truth and beauty three things are necessary, the clear eye, the loving heart, the steadfast faith. Literary men so gifted are to be looked upon as a perpetual priesthood, setting forth the

a *Wotton Reinfred.*
b *Ibid.*

Divine Idea to each new age in the forms which that age demands and will understand. In our time one literature alone has given us poetry in this high sense, the German.

The various poets are criticised from this point of view. Goethe is a great poet because he has "incorporated the everlasting Reason of Man in forms visible to his Sense." Similarly Burns is a true poet, because in his heart resides "some effluence of wisdom, some tone of the 'Eternal Melodies,'" and because he has discerned that "the Ideal world is not remote from the Actual, but under it and within it," finding beauty even in the Scottish peasant's life, "the meanest and rudest of all lives."

Less gifted writers, for example, certain of the German playwrights, are distinguished as prosaists and not poets. Their art is "a knack, a recipe, or secret of the craft"; it is manufacture and not creation. For poetry there is no secret except this general one, "that the poet be a man of purer, higher, and richer nature than other men."

We have seen that Voltaire stands for

Carlyle as a type in marked contrast with Goethe. He fails of being a poet, not because he is without intellectual vision, but because he is without love and reverence, and without faith. The Divine Idea has no meaning for him. He lives in appearances and not in reality. He is not capable of true humor, but only of ridicule, grounded not on "fond sportful sympathy," but on contempt or indifference. His verse is the result of contrivance and not of inspiration; it is distinguished by a modish elegance, not by universal, everlasting beauty.

Historically considered, poetry is to be looked upon as an expression of the highest spiritual attainment of the epoch in which it is written, "the test how far Music, or Freedom, existed therein"; and the success of the literary historian will depend upon his ability to discern and record this highest aim or enthusiasm in its successive directions and developments. Judged by this standard the present age cannot be ranked high. The poetry of our time fails to disclose "to our sense the deep infinite harmonies of Nature and Man's soul"; it "has no eye for the Invisible"; it worships strength

rather than beauty.[a] And yet, in spite of this fact and largely owing to the chaotic condition of religious thought and belief, literature has taken a commanding place in the modern world. The "true Autocrat and Pope" of to-day is the Man of Letters, "the real or seeming wisest of the past age";[b] "the true Church of England, at this moment, lies in the Editors of its Newspapers."[c] Still more hopefully may we look to Germany, where signs of a new spiritual era are to be met with, and skepticism, frivolity and sensuality are beginning to disappear before the return of the "ancient creative inspiration."

In criticising Carlyle's theory of poetry it must be remembered that it is an integral part of a well-considered philosophy. This philosophy lays chief emphasis on inspiration, intuition, and the primary energies of man's nature. Just as in religion Carlyle minimized almost to the vanishing point the importance of evidences of the faith and authority of the church, so in poetry he looked upon matters of technique as of prac-

a *Signs of the Times.*
b *Historic Survey.*
c *Signs of the Times.*

tically negligible value. To the man of truly poetic inspiration he believed that these things would come as a matter of course. The failure to realize how important a part verbal music plays in poetry is partly due also to a very defective ear, a fact which becomes evident in reading Carlyle's early attempts at verse, notably the blank verse translations in the *Schiller*.

A further limitation was the result of his Scotch peasant inheritance. He was born a Calvinist and remained through life a Puritan. The sensuous made little appeal to him. His range of interests was narrow, being practically confined to those activities which have a clearly demonstrable relation to religion and conduct. In critical and troubled times he advised the earnest man to "perambulate his picture gallery" in silence, he execrated "view hunting" and the chatter that resulted from it, and he had little patience with poetry which ended in mere pastime. Carlyle's culture was not perfectly rounded, it was too preponderatingly Hebraic and not sufficiently Hellenic, and his estimate of poetry suffers from this limitation.

On the other hand, as applied at any rate to the best poetry, his criticism has a depth of penetration corresponding to its narrowness. Such poetry is invested with lofty dignity, it is given a definite place in a profound philosophy of life, and it is shown in its proper relations to art and religion as a manifestation of the human spirit. Carlyle had himself many of the essential qualities of a true poet, he knew the tones of the great "road-melody or marching-music of mankind," and here as elsewhere he speaks to us not without authority.

III

SPIRITUAL HISTORY

More important than any discussions in the abstract concerning Poetry, Philosophy, or Religion, is Carlyle's interest in spiritual biography. This may be called his paramount and omnipresent interest. The great aim of all study is looked upon as the acquisition of wisdom in the ordering of life. The great source of such wisdom is the biography of spiritually gifted men. To this end all poetry, philosophy and history are contributory. These are but different modes of manifestation of the human spirit. History is defined as the essence of innumerable biographies; art derives its chief value from its revelation of the personality of the artist; poetry should be made the means of interpreting the poet. Biography of the sort which Carlyle chose to write contains three elements which, consciously or unconsciously, he seems to have regarded as indispensable: the ideal, based upon and growing out of the actual, and

affording opportunity for instruction and edification. A biography may be said to possess ideality when it deals with lofty character, and when it shows the aim and tendency of a life as well as its accomplishment, and its meaning as well as its external activity. It possesses actuality when it is based upon ascertained facts; and it may be made instructive by pointing out its typical character in relation to the life which we ourselves must live and the difficulties which we must encounter. Such biography possesses the highest sort of dignity and should result from a reverent and dispassionate inquiry. Sympathetic endeavor to understand should precede judgment. Readers in studying the life of a great man should strive "to work their way into his manner of thought, till they see the world with his eyes, feel as he felt and judge as he judged, neither believing nor denying, till they can in some measure so feel and so judge."

Consequently the most important facts of history or biography are not the external but the internal. These facts are not the most obvious and often make the least stir. Biographers are prone to forget that "man

has a soul as certainly as he has a body" and "that properly it is the course of his unseen, spiritual life which informs and rules his external visible life, rather than receives rule from it; in which spiritual *life*, indeed, and not in any outward action or condition arising from it, the true secret of his history lies, and is to be sought after, and indefinitely approached." To portray the facts of history or biography so as to make manifest their true spiritual significance is a task then of boundless importance and of boundless difficulty, a fit task to engage the powers of philosopher and poet. The choice of appropriate subjects for biographical treatment is also of importance. Two types of men seem especially significant, the man who represents some important period, national character, or historic movement, and the man, especially characteristic of the modern age, who has gone through some sort of moral struggle, with or without victory. Of the first sort are Voltaire, Goethe, Novalis, Johnson; of the latter, Goethe, Schiller and Burns are the most important whom Carlyle studies. This is for the modern man the most instructive and

precious species of biography. It furnishes the spectacle of a life nobler than the ordinary fighting the battle offered to all noble souls, and is thus the means of furnishing us with inspiration and faith in ourselves. All of the biographical studies should be brought to the test which Carlyle himself applied, of ideality, actuality, and edification. Thus, Werner is "a gifted spirit struggling earnestly amid the new, complex, tumultuous influences of his time and country." Richter, a still more instructive example, is a character heroic and devout, formed in our own age through "manifold and victorious struggling with the world" and constituting a Gospel of Freedom, "preached abroad to all men; whereby, among mean unbelieving souls, we may know that nobleness has not yet become impossible; and, languishing amid boundless triviality and despicability, still understand that man's nature is indefeasibly divine, and so hold fast what is the most important of all faiths, the faith in ourselves." The essays on Heyne and the German playwrights are not of importance in either of the ways mentioned, and Carlyle considered them as pieces of comparatively

little worth. The formulation of a biographical method was of course a gradual process and a comparison in this respect of his earlier and his later work is highly instructive.

The *Life of Schiller* is a clear, simple, engaging narrative, free from mannerism, stating the biographical facts with scrupulous fidelity and criticising the works with sympathy and insight. It has been praised by all its critics, and is indeed one of the most irreproachable things that Carlyle ever did. His own entire dissatisfaction with it and later desire to suppress it have occasioned surprise, and it has been suggested that this dissatisfaction arose after the perfection of the characteristic Carlylese diction, which made the early work seem immature and ineffective. But Carlyle was never satisfied with it, and his own criticism, "My mind will not catch hold of it," expresses the essential truth. If we compare the *Life of Schiller* with the first essay on Goethe written in 1828, we shall see that in the earlier work Carlyle has not yet penetrated to the heart of his subject, or thoroughly assimilated the facts at his disposal.

Many of them are unrelated to any central purpose. The book shows skill rather than power, clear rather than piercing vision.

Yet the ideal of what biography should aim at is already becoming plain. The author proposes "to follow the steps of his [Schiller's] intellectual and moral culture; to gather from his life and works some picture of himself." As the occurrences of history are to be measured "by their influence upon the general history of man, their tendency to obstruct or to forward him in his advancement towards liberty, knowledge, true religion and dignity of mind," so facts of biography are to be judged as they contribute to spiritual culture. In Schiller Carlyle first found a mind in several important ways representative of the vital experiences common to his own day. Here was a pure and lofty soul struggling in the midst of a complex and intricate civilization to find an adequate standing-ground for himself, whereon he could attain to his true spiritual stature and unity with himself. "The Ideal Man that lay within him, the image of himself as he *should* be, was formed upon a strict and curious standard; and to reach this con-

stantly approached and constantly receding emblem of perfection was the unwearied effort of his life." He was encompassed with many obstructions, and harassed by poverty and disease, but he learned to conquer pain and to attain to a lofty serenity. This spiritual progress is clearly portrayed in his works, which pass from the explosive violence of *The Robbers* through various intermediate stages to the wisdom of *Tell* and the lofty beauty of *Wallenstein.*

Schiller illustrates also the struggle with the modern malady of religious doubt. He bears the marks of many a gloomy conflict; he reveals the earnest mind that has learned to look upon life as a solemn mystery; his works bear "the impress of a philosophic and poetic mind struggling with all its vast energies to make its poetry and its philosophy agree." This high seriousness reveals itself also in his love of truth, his hatred of cant, his recognition of genius as "the inspired gift of God, a solemn mandate to its owner to go forth and labor in his sphere," and of literature as the essence of "whatever speaks to the immortal part of man."

But in spite of Schiller's loftiness and

beauty of character Carlyle has already discovered that he is unsatisfying. Though he struggles stoutly against doubt, puts it aside or lives manfully in spite of it, he never succeeds in resolving it. "Many of his later poems indicate an incessant and increasing longing for some solution of the mystery of life; at times it is a gloomy resignation to the want and the despair of any." For such solution Carlyle discovered then that he must look elsewhere. Two sources of help and inspiration are already beginning to interest him. These are the poetry of Goethe and the transcendental philosophy of Kant and his followers.

The second part of the present work contains a striking contrast between Goethe and Schiller. The one is like Shakespeare, the other like Milton; one is Catholic, the other sectarian; one is tolerant, peaceful, collected, the other is earnest, devoted, intense, "at war with the one half of things, in love with the other half." Where Schiller had but battled bravely, Goethe had in large measure attained.

The later essay on Schiller, written in 1829, is not a mere abstract of the earlier

life, but a second presentment of the subject in accordance with maturer standards. Here, Schiller's life is treated as a piece of spiritual history. The "high purpose after spiritual perfection," which is the true end of man's life, is found in him as love of poetry. He pursues it through life without wavering and unmixed with worldly ambition. He does not, indeed, ever attain to such deep wisdom as that of Goethe or Shakespeare. He never learns to discern the miraculous in the common, or to find poetry in the midst of prose. He does not possess that sort of humor which "is properly the exponent of low things; that which first renders them poetical to the mind," but dwells rather upon old "conventionally-noble themes." Less broad in his interests than Goethe, his life is nevertheless highly instructive from the very intensity and simplicity of its purpose.

Carlyle's first attempts to give Englishmen some knowledge of the man whom he considered the greatest genius of modern Europe were contained in the translation of *Wilhelm Meister* in 1824 and the volume of *German Romance* in 1826. Of the former

book we know that Carlyle's admiration at this time was by no means unqualified. Of the latter he says in the preface that it was "not of my suggesting or desiring, but of my executing as honest journeywork in defect of better." We learn from the letters that it was done with pleasure and satisfaction, with less agonizing perhaps than any other of his books.

The preface to the first edition of *Wilhelm Meister* is honest and straightforward. As a translator Carlyle lays claim only to fidelity; as an ultimate object he seeks to further the study of German literature among his countrymen. As a criticism of Goethe it need not detain us, since we find it so soon superseded by the comment in the *German Romance.*

It is plain from the latter that Goethe has now come to represent for Carlyle the typical modern man of genius, and his career and works to furnish the best image of that ideal spiritual life which it is the highest mission of all art to body forth. And as attainment is seen in its fullness of meaning only as the crown of effort and the conquest of imperfection, so the wisdom of *Meister's*

Travels becomes more impressive when we understand it as the matured product of the same hand whose youth expressed itself in the waywardness of *Götz von Berlichingen* and *The Sorrows of Werther.*

That Goethe manifests the calmness, beauty and strength that come from victory after severe conflict, that his rest is not the result of surrender but of conquest, that his is a mind in perfect unity with itself, these facts constitute the first reason for the pre-eminent interest which Goethe should arouse in us. His life gives to the modern struggler and doubter the inspiration and faith that he too may battle successfully.

Moreover, the life and works of Goethe have an immense advantage over others in that they belong to the modern world. We find reflected in him the science and the skepticism of the age, yet joined with poetry and imagination. Every age requires that its spiritual life shall be reïnterpreted in terms of its own, in order to be continually effective. By doing this Goethe has proved that faith and affirmation belong not less to the modern than to the ancient and medieval world.

That Goethe's final message is a positive one constitutes its greatest importance. "He is not a questioner and a despiser, but a teacher and a reverencer; not a destroyer, but a builder-up; not a wit only, but a wise man." In this respect he contrasts sharply with Voltaire. Here we have already the antithesis which Carlyle was to develop more and more fully as he proceeded. Goethe and Voltaire are henceforth to constitute for him two great representative types of the modern intellect.

It is evident from the above analysis that Carlyle's object in making his countrymen acquainted with Goethe is not merely that of a literary critic. The message is one of light to those who are sitting in darkness, of hope and salvation to men in despair. The story of Goethe's life is to bring inspiration, his poetry is to bring peace. As in the case of Schiller, but with far greater satisfaction, we are to estimate the life and the writings together as the progressive revelation of a single spirit; literature is to be interpreted in terms of life.

Similarly the minor German novelists are presented to us, not, like Goethe, as com-

pletely rounded men, but as possessing this or that spiritual gift of value. Among these Richter is especially significant. He too has learned to look upon human life with an understanding of its vanities and yet with love; to rejoice in man's immortality; to interpret nature in terms of spirit; "from the solemn phases of the starry heavens to the simple floweret of the meadow, his eye and his heart are open for her charms and her mystic meanings." The description of Hoffmann is equally interesting as suggesting certain traits utilized later in the creation of the shaggy oracle of Weissnicht-wo. Taken all together these fragments of the German novelists are offered as a contribution, not lofty, but of genuine value, to the study of man and nature.[a]

The first essay which illustrates Carlyle's mature biographical method is the 1828 essay on Goethe. From this point of view it is the most important of the *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays.* Here Carlyle at-

a In a note to the discussion of Goethe, Carlyle first introduces the term *Philistine* into English literature. His offhand explanation of it as descriptive of one who "judged of poetry as he judged of Brunswick mum, by its *utility,*" connects it with the mechanical philosophy of Utilitarianism, which he was to oppose so vehemently in later years.

tempts to do in the case of a living man, the man whose life has furnished the most satisfactory material for such an undertaking, exactly what he tries to accomplish in the case of *Sartor* with typical and autobiographical material. Goethe's life represents the victorious struggle against the manifold spiritual perplexities of modern life. Such a struggle "must take place, more or less consciously, in every character that, especially in these times, attains to spiritual manhood; and in characters possessing any thoughtfulness and sensibility, will seldom take place without a too painful consciousness, without bitter conflicts, in which the character itself is too often maimed and impoverished, and which end too often not in victory, but in defeat, or fatal compromise with the enemy."

With these considerations in mind Carlyle's problem is plain. It is so to arrange the facts of Goethe's life at his disposal and so to present the substance of his works that this spiritual struggle and victory with the various stages in which progress is made will become clear to the reader. Accordingly we find the essay free on the one hand from

entertaining biographical gossip and on the other from technical literary criticism. It is a bit of spiritual history for which both life and works are used as documents. Its more important passages from the days of *Götz von Berlichingen* and *Werther* to those of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* and *Meister's Wanderjahre* are accordingly delineated from this point of view.

Carlyle begins the essay on Burns with a criticism of the earlier biographers. The usual fault has been to present us "with a detached catalogue of his several supposed attributes, virtues and vices, instead of a delineation of the resulting character as a living unity." The true biography should aim on the other hand to acquaint us "with all the inward springs and relations" of the character whose life is studied. So far as it is possible, therefore, in a short sketch Carlyle attempts to penetrate into the central meaning of Burns' life, and to discover the causes of his success and his failure.

The chief trouble with Burns Carlyle finds to reside in the lack of clear unity of aim. The poet has great gifts of insight, of sincerity, of love, but he fails to consecrate

them to a single high purpose. His life is, therefore, one of fragments. Instead of making a clear choice, he strives to reconcile the irreconcilable, "to mingle in friendly union the common spirit of the world with the spirit of poetry." This is only another way of saying that Burns has not performed what we have seen elsewhere to be the first great step toward right life, the act of self-renunciation. "He would be happy, not actively and in himself, but passively and from some ideal cornucopia of Enjoyments, not earned by his own labour, but showered on him by the beneficence of Destiny." The poet especially must be capable of the heroic life. He has no right to expect kindness from his age, "but is rather bound to do it great kindness." Burns' failure, therefore, was an internal and not an external one, "it is his inward, not his outward misfortunes that bring him to the dust."

The interest which attaches to the character of Voltaire is not that of struggle and development, but of representative quality. "He rises before us as the paragon and epitome of a whole spiritual period," a period of intellect divorced from sympathy,

of wit without wisdom, of persiflage. He is, therefore, no complete man like Goethe, but the great exponent of an age of division. He is the great Persifleur, lacking in earnestness, sympathy, reverence, and therefore without the deepest insight; does not possess what Ruskin called "heartsight," but only eyesight; Truth of the deepest sort is, therefore, hidden from him. His faculty is chiefly one of ridicule and denial, rather than of affirmation and construction. On the other hand, unlike Burns, he is not divided in his aim; he possesses unity with himself, so that he ends in a great blaze of success. Carlyle leaves us, however, with the feeling that Burns, whose life was a struggle ending in failure, was a nobler man than Voltaire, whose life was an almost unimpeded triumph.

The lack of struggle is, as a matter of fact, in itself the proof of lack of the poetic nature. It is the curse laid upon every poet that he must endure spiritual torment, for he is called upon to "struggle from the littleness and obstruction of an Actual world, into the freedom and infinitude of an Ideal," and the history of this struggle is the history of his life. Men like Voltaire do not truly hear

this call at all, men like Burns and Byron hear it, but have not strength to follow it wholly. It is only the greatest, men like Goethe and Schiller, who hear it clearly and follow it resolutely. Our age is an age of Halfness, of "halting between two opinions," uncertain whether to compound with God or the devil. The lives of such men as Schiller and Goethe are, therefore, of peculiar importance to us.

These four men, Voltaire, the skeptic; Burns, the noble failure; Schiller, the lofty radiant spirit; Goethe, the profound, broadly human sage, are four great representative types of the human spirit, and together may indicate to us the ideal human life as it exists under modern conditions. It only remained to select the most essential elements in them, to interpret these in the light of an intense personal struggle, and to present their abstract as the typical manly life of our perplexing age. This was to be the work of *Sartor Resartus*.

But the biographical second book of *Sartor* had its forerunners in two different sorts of writing in the early period. The first was analytic, a series of studies which attempted

to probe the motive impulses and display their operation in the lives of such men as most significantly interpreted the contemporary life. These form the biographical studies which we have been examining. The other was synthetic, an attempt to set forth the eternal truth concerning the life of man in conflict with the world in forms of the higher creative imagination. The first appearance of Carlyle's interest in the writing of fiction is in the letter of 1822, outlining the plan of a novel to be written in collaboration. The only actual attempt of this sort before *Sartor*, with the exception of an unimportant sketch contributed to *Fraser's Magazine*,[a] is the unfinished novel of *Wotton Reinfred*. One of the critical essays, however, first deserves attention.

The first published passage in which Carlyle clearly sets forth as typical the essential elements involved in the struggle presented in *Sartor Resartus* occurs in the essay on *Goethe's Helena*. In the earlier part of this essay the drama of *Faust* is sketched. We have on the one hand Mephistopheles representing the spirit of Denial, "perfect Under-

a *Cruthers and Johnson, Fraser's Magazine*, January, 1831.

standing with perfect Selfishness," the Everlasting No of *Sartor*. On the other hand we have Faust representing the spirit of Inquiry and Endeavor, a man of infinite aspiration, persuaded that he is destined to achieve that lofty happiness for which he is ready to sacrifice all lower forms of pleasure, quitting the ways of vulgar men but unable to find the true light, moved always by pride, love of power and love of self. In *Faust* there is no such triumphant issue as in *Sartor*, but the opposing elements in the struggle are essentially the same.

Wotton Reinfred follows in general the lines indicated by Carlyle in the letter to Miss Welsh of December, 1822. Wotton is Carlyle in exceedingly thin disguise, his parents are Carlyle's parents, and Jane Montagu, while to some extent similar in circumstances to Margaret Gordon, is more emphatically Jane Welsh. Wotton, like Carlyle, cannot remember ever having been unable to read. Like Carlyle, he is a "timid still boy," tormented by his school fellows, and passing for a bookworm and a coward until he flashes forth in a rage of fearless uncontrolled anger. His early life is sad-

dened by the loss of a sister. He enters the university with boundless hopes, most of them doomed to disappointment. Mathematics takes the first strong hold upon him, but he soon discovers that his "spiritual nature is not fed" by this study. He turns to philosophy, reads the French skeptics and the philosophy of Epicurus, but remains dissatisfied. He meditates various professions and even attempts that of law. Disgusted with its technicalities and doubtful of its value, he abandons this pursuit and hurries into the country, where he undergoes a period of spiritual torment and struggle, wandering "in endless labyrinths of doubt, or in the void darkness of denial." Then come the new hope inspired by his love for Jane Montagu,[a] and the disillusionment that follows her enforced separation from him. His first desperation consequent upon this incident gives way at last to an "iron quietude" and the thought occurs to him which Carlyle imputes later to Teufelsdröckh and to Dante: "Destiny itself cannot doom us not to die."

a The relation of Jane Montagu to the Blumine of *Sartor Resartus* is fully treated by Professor McMechan in the introduction to his edition of that book.

At the opening of the story we find Wotton in this not altogether comfortable condition, a skeptic longing for belief, a passionate lover of good but uncertain as to what good is, desiring to act but with all his powers of action paralyzed by unbelief. His friends, aware of his capabilities and solicitous for his welfare, plan to take him on a journey with the hope of diverting his mind from its broodings by action. Wotton readily agrees, and the story from this time on to the end of the seventh chapter, where the narrative was dropped, is, for the most part, an account of the hero's wanderings, meditations and conversations. In the sixth chapter Jane Montagu appears again, and a very promising villain is introduced in the shape of Captain Walter, a former rival contestant for the hand of Jane Montagu.

The story is almost entirely innocent of plot and suffers far more from division of purpose than does *Sartor Resartus*. Carlyle evidently expects to make the usual concessions to the demand for romance, intrigue, and complication of plot, but lacks both the interest and the power of invention necessary to accomplish this purpose. There is

not a trace of humor and little contrast in character drawing. All the characters are in deadly earnest, most of them represent some phase or other of Carlyle's own character, and a majority are afflicted with a morbid tendency to introspection and a consuming desire to find an answer to the "happiness-question." Their conversation is wanting in flexibility and is always painfully serious and anxious. Much of it takes place in a mysterious House of the Wolds, a strange hotbed of dissatisfied philosophers, who contend for the opposing merits of Kant and Epicurus over their eggs and coffee. We are treated to much lofty discourse, but the shadow and sunshine of the common human life, which we are accustomed to look for in the modern novel dealing with contemporary material, is wholly lacking. The book does not contain a single feature necessary to success in this field.

As a book of personal philosophy and as an anticipation of the author's later work, it is far more interesting. Most of the chief tenets of Carlyle's philosophy appear in some form. We hear nothing of Hero-Worship, but the gospels of work, of the

renunciation of happiness, of the necessity of belief and of the hatred of cant, are all prominent. The style is that of the early essays, but many sentences were extracted, with or without change, for use in the later writings.[a] The conversation is largely given over to philosophical discussion and often turns into sermonizing and monologue, as Carlyle's and Coleridge's own conversation was only too likely to do. No novel is to be nourished on such fare, nor did Carlyle willingly turn back from such congenial writing to the necessity of forwarding his plot and humanizing his characters. Moreover, as the outline given will show, he followed the facts of his own life too slavishly. *Wotton Reinfred,* if for no other reason, is interesting as evidence of Carlyle's entire unfitness for the writing of fiction.

A word must be said in conclusion concerning the relation of Carlyle's studies in spiritual biography and their culmination in the

a Compare, for instance, the following sentence with the similar passages in *History* and the chapter on *Natural Supernaturalism* in *Sartor:* " 'The Book of Nature,' said Wotton, 'is written in such strange intertwisted characters, that you may spell from among them a few words in *any* alphabet, but to read the whole is for omniscience alone.' "

semi-autobiographical second book of *Sartor* to other romantic autobiographical fiction of similar character. Goethe of course furnished the most important model. Carlyle attempted, first in *Wotton Reinfred* and afterwards in *Sartor*, to compress into a single volume the essence of the various phases of the spiritual struggle presented in Goethe's *Werther* (1774), *Meister's Lehrjahre* (1795) and *Meister's Wanderjahre* (1821). Teufelsdröckh passes through Werther's melancholy and sentimentalism to emerge at last victorious, having learned the lesson of abnegation which Meister had taught him.

Carlyle's earlier biographical studies had already suggested to him the four main romantic elements which characterize the autobiographical portion of *Sartor*. These are, it seems to me, four in number: melancholy unrest or discontentment; struggle; the quest after an ideal; symbolic or representative character. A romantic work, according to a recent definition, "is a record of exploration in the realm of the material, the mental or the spiritual, in search of an

ideal."[a] In this sense *Sartor* is essentially romantic.

The melancholy unrest or discontentment which characterizes Teufelsdröckh, and in a more exaggerated way Wotton Reinfred, was typical of Carlyle's age and has been called the *mal du siècle*. Goethe had found it in Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloise* and *Confessions* and gives copious expression to it in *Werther*. It was increased by the political and social unrest which followed the French Revolution and was beginning to find expression in the rising French romantic school. Alfred de Musset's autobiographical romance, *La Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle* (1837), is a product of conditions in France comparable with those at work in England and influencing Carlyle. Both Schiller and the youthful Goethe clearly exhibit this trait of unrest. The quest after an ideal, often baffling or unattainable, is another not uncommon feature of nineteenth century romantic literature. The typical example is *The Blue Flower* of Novalis, an author who exercised an early and lasting influence on Carlyle.

a F. H. Stoddard, *The Evolution of the English Novel*, page 132.

Professor Beers has pointed out repetitions of this idea in Lowell, Whittier, Emerson and others. In *Sartor* its influence is especially apparent in the chapter called *Sorrows of Teufelsdröckh.* Carlyle looked upon Goethe's life as such an ideal quest, issuing in triumphant success. The element of struggle, which, as we have seen, Carlyle considered unavoidable in the noble modern life, and which he found amply illustrated in the lives of the great Germans, and the symbolic and representative character which he wished to give to both *Wotton Reinfred* and *Sartor*, constitute the other clearly marked romantic traits of these books. It is especially in the last characteristic that *Sartor* differs not only from the methods of the eighteenth century writers of fiction, but from such nineteenth century autobiographical fiction as Bulwer's *The Caxtons* (1849) and *My Novel* (1853), Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1849-51), and Borrow's *Lavengro* (1851) and *Romany Rye* (1857). Carlyle makes little use of such picturesque material as interested these writers, and prefers the *a priori* method. He writes his story to

illustrate a preconceived idea of general application.

It is also this desire to delineate the typical and ideal modern life as a means for edification, that separates Carlyle's biographical method from that more commonly in vogue since the production of Boswell's *Johnson*, the aim of which was to present a vivid and intimate picture of the individual man. Carlyle fully appreciated the merits of this great work and of its much maligned author, but he had no intention of becoming a Boswell. It is true that in *Cromwell* he faithfully subordinated his own very definite opinion of his hero to the evidence of the actual letters and speeches, and that in general his power of vivid portraiture is unexcelled. But he believed it the primary duty of a biographer to interpret as well as to present a life. The ultimate purpose of the second book of *Sartor Resartus* and that of the 1828 essay on Goethe are identical, and Carlyle's interest in each form of writing helps us in no small degree to understand the principle of selection which governed the composition of the other.

IV

THE TIMES

The more intensely interested a man becomes in the needs of his own times, the less intent is he likely to become upon the calm enunciation of universal truth and the more on the vital utterance of that particular side or aspect of truth which seems to be needed at the moment. He becomes less of a philosopher and more of a prophet. Carlyle passed through this change. Toward the latter part of his life he found himself little moved by transcendental distinctions, was even ready to call it all "moonshine," but he became more and more vehement in his objurgations against sham and his recommendations of sincerity and hero-worship.

In one sense, however, all his writings, from the very beginning, may be said to have had a practical application in mind. The letters, the prefaces and the essays themselves show us that the German literature which Carlyle was devoting himself to making known in England, was looked upon

as medicative and restorative, a needed antidote to the materialism and skepticism of English literature and philosophy. Locke had paved the way "for banishing religion from the world." Voltaire had furthered the same cause in France. Germany alone still retained a faith in the Invisible. Goethe, Schiller, Richter, Novalis, still held fast to this faith. Knowledge of these writers is the first step to removing the incubus of unbelief from the rest of Europe. "To judge from the signs of the times," Carlyle had said in the preface to *German Romance*, "this general diffusion of German among us seems a consummation not far distant. As an individual I cannot but anticipate from it some little evil and much good."

By 1827 he had begun to analyze his age, and to look upon it as a critical period in the world's history. His view of it, however, was so far an optimistic one. In the essay on *German Literature* he speaks of his time as an era of promise and threatening, in which "many elements of good and evil are everywhere in conflict." The rapid material advance characteristic of the century seems on the whole beneficial. "The

commerce in material things has paved roads for commerce in things spiritual, and a true thought, or a noble creation, passes lightly to us from remotest countries, provided only our minds be open to receive it." An eloquent and still more optimistic passage closes the essay. In spite of religious uncertainty we may be assured that Religion and Poetry are not dead; that they are "eternal as the being of man." Even amid the trivialities of every-day life we are striving as best we may to catch "tidings from loftier worlds." "Meanwhile the first condition of success is, that, in striving honestly ourselves, we honestly acknowledge the striving of our neighbor; that with a will unwearied in seeking Truth, we have a Sense open for it, wheresoever and howsoever it may arise."

A similar plea for "tolerant and sober investigation" of foreign thought, especially of the so-called German mysticism, closes the essay on Novalis. Whatever its aberrations, Carlyle feels that mysticism will prove superior to the "Coffin-and-Gas-Philosophy" which it opposes. He agrees with Jean Paul that "our present time is indeed a criticising and critical time," but trusts in

spite of this that it will find some issue out of all its perplexities.

The spirit of this closing paragraph of *Novalis* finds ampler expression in the next essay on *Signs of the Times*. From some points of view this is the most important of the early essays. It is Carlyle's first broad and full discussion of the needs of his age, its disease and the remedy to be applied. It contains the germinal thought of all his later work, and looks forward not only to *Sartor*, but to *Past and Present* and the *Latterday Pamphlets*. It attracted attention, if not widely, at any rate in quarters where it was likely to bring forth fruit. The St. Simonians, as we have seen, began to look upon Carlyle as a spiritual leader, and "disciplekins" in London to express their belief in him; while Lowell dates the rise of Transcendentalism in New England from the appearance of *Signs of the Times* and *History*. In his discussion of *mechanism* Carlyle sounded a note which has been echoed by all the great didactic essayists of the nineteenth century.

The essay possesses a high degree of unity and is simply expressed. The age is a criti-

cal one, and is everywhere recognized as such. As distinguished from other ages, it may be designated as the Mechanical Age or Age of Machinery. This mechanical character may be discerned not only in the great increase of machinery in industry but in the elaborate organization in all branches of thought and life, social, scientific, religious, philosophical and literary. The dominion of Mechanism, if made absolute, cannot but end in disaster. The renovation of society can come only through a return to faith in *Dynamics*, by which is meant "the primary, unmodified forces and energies of man, the mysterious springs of Love, and Fear, and Wonder, of Enthusiasm, Poetry, Religion."

In speaking of the relation of *Signs of the Times* to the period in which it was written, it may be premised that the essay was to some extent an outcome of Carlyle's anxious and apprehensive temperament as well as of external conditions. Professor Masson, in his *Life of Chatterton*, makes the remark that every age is likely to look upon itself as an especially critical one. Whether or not this be true, it is certain that men of

Carlyle's disposition are wont to find a crisis impending under whatever conditions they may be placed. The author of the *Signs of the Times* is the same Carlyle who almost forty years later wrote: "There probably never was since the Heptarchy ended, or almost since it began, so hugely critical an epoch in the history of England as this we have now entered upon."[a] On the other hand, in several important ways this essay is an expression of the thought current in 1829. It appeared during a period of anxious and excited thought and discussion, at the very height of the Reform movement which began soon after the close of the French Revolution in 1815. 1829 was the year of the Catholic Emancipation Act; in the previous year the Test Act, admitting dissenters to public offices, had become law; three years later the great Reform Bill, already warmly debated in parliament, was passed. England, indeed, owing to the rapid advance accomplished through the French Revolution, had been outstripped in political progress by the continental nations. It was inevitable that a radical revision and mod-

a *Shooting Niagara; and After?* 1867.

ernization of her institutions should take place, and Englishmen by 1829 had begun to realize that these changes were revolutionary in character. This gave rise to an anxiously critical spirit and to alternating optimism and pessimism. Throughout the whole period the demands of the working people were becoming more and more insistent. The Luddite riots of 1811-1819, the Peterloo massacre of 1819, the Corn law agitation of 1825-1846 and the Chartist Movement of 1832, are symptoms of the general progress. Not only *Signs of the Times* but *Characteristics*, *Sartor Resartus*, *Chartism* and *Past and Present* are to be read in the light of these events.

In October, 1825, the *Quarterly Review* had spoken of the condition of England as "a singular if not a critical state of things," in which "engines of great power, for good or ill, are set in action," but had found satisfaction in an "almost universal peace abroad, and a more than common contentment at home." In June, 1826, the same periodical indulges in a eulogy of England, rejoicing in her prosperity and prospect of future greatness. In accordance with the

tendency of the period to apply a nickname it speaks of the time as "the age of industry," "the age of comfort to the poor," and "the age of the people."

By April, 1829, however, the *Quarterly* has changed its tune. An article on the *State and Prospects of the Country* makes careful examination of England's condition. Causes of discontent are found in the heavy burdens of public debt and the poor rates, in the redundancy of the population, and in the raising of undue pretensions owing to past prosperity. "Symptoms now and then appear," it says, "which look as if all were wearing out, and the present order of things were verging to one of those great changes to which all sublunary affairs are subject."

Blackwood's for July, 1829, finds no small cause for amusement in this sudden right-about of the *Quarterly*. It undertakes, however, to examine the causes of the "bitter misery" of the population on its own account and among others adds overtrading, bad harvests, the corn laws and the increase of machinery, to those discovered by the *Quarterly*. In the September following *Blackwood's* points out the coëxistence of immod-

erate luxury among the aristocracy with unexampled misery among the laboring classes, the latter largely due to the readjustment made necessary by the great increase of machinery. In October, 1830, an article on *The Present Crisis* repeats the judgment of the *Quarterly*. "In no period of modern times has the settled order of things appeared to be so extensively under the influence of desire for change." The author of this article likewise finds the use of machinery raising a "very vital question." In December, 1830, *Blackwood's* attempts once more to analyze the "Spirit of the Age," an undertaking which "absorbs, at present, the attention of the world." According to this writer the spirit of the age is one of social and political discontent manifesting itself among the people and demanding certain reforms, chief among which are republican form of government, reduction of taxes, of pensions and sinecures, and of church property, repeal of the corn laws, and parliamentary reform.

A similar feeling of anxiety or distrust had been expressed by *The Athenæum* in January, 1828. In spite of the unexampled

progress "in everything connected with the senses" it doubts "whether we have advanced at all proportionably in those higher and interior qualities which are of infinitely more importance towards the perfection of each individual nature, but display themselves far less definitely by outward and calculable manifestations." *The Athenæum* proposes to watch "the signs of the times" as they appear in contemporary writers. All this is somewhat in Carlyle's own vein. In a later number of the magazine the same writer deprecates the tendency of a large class of literary men "to seek the moral amelioration of mankind by the pursuit or diffusion of the merely physical or mathematical sciences."

It was natural that the use of machinery should occupy a large share of men's thoughts. It is difficult for us to realize how rapidly the industrial age had arisen. For centuries men had been content to till their fields and weave their cloth in the ways that their fathers had taught them. Suddenly toward the close of the eighteenth century a marvelous series of mechanical inventions began to appear and to revolutionize every

industry. The inauguration of the factory system resulted in the most conspicuous features of modern society, the growth of great manufacturing towns, the appearance of the capitalist class, the consequent dependence of the workman upon the capitalist, the increased employment of men and women in manufacturing, and the vast expansion of commerce. This great industrial revolution began in England and advanced most rapidly there. During the twenty-five years which preceded the publication of *The French Revolution* the number of power looms in England increased from twenty-four hundred to one hundred thousand. The magazines, as we have seen, made the use of machinery a frequent topic of discussion. Sometimes they found it a cause of anxiety, sometimes of rejoicing. Practically all of these discussions were economic in character; most of them considered the causes of alarm to reside in the misery which machinery might bring to the working classes, and through their discontent upon the upper classes.

The feeling of depression due to the sense of various impending crises was deepened by

the dark outlook in the field of literary enterprise. The great poets were all dead or had ended their poetical careers. Byron, Keats and Shelley had passed away. Crabbe and Scott had ceased to write poetry. Wordsworth's inspiration was gone, Southey was writing prose, Coleridge was "involved in an eternal maze of metaphysics"; thus *Fraser's Magazine* laments the decay of poetry. Various reasons were assigned for this, the social and political disturbances, the interest in economics and physical science; it seemed doubtful to some whether the muse would ever lift her head again. "When the Pelion of political economy is piled upon the Ossa of scientific research, surmounted with a pagoda of four-volumed fashionable novels, it's time for the invaded deities to betake them to earth, and become (or appear) 'of the earth earthy,' or perish utterly."[a]

Finally, the great scientific advance in the eighteenth century had resulted in a more liberal and enlightened religious spirit. At the same time the apparently solid foundations of religious belief had in many cases

a *Fraser's Magazine,* December, 1834.

been shaken, and thousands of thoughtful men had become troubled and doubtful. The natural tendency to materialism consequent on the introduction of mechanism united with the rationalistic and skeptical thought largely imported from France. The English deists of the early eighteenth century had been followed by the skepticism of Voltaire, the atheism of Diderot and the Encyclopædists, and the sentimental deism of Rousseau. On the other hand, a devoutly religious spirit, though dependent less upon authority than upon reason and intuition, made its appearance in Germany in Kant, Novalis, Richter, and other transcendentalist philosophers and men of letters.

In these various ways, then, Carlyle's essay is an expression of the current feeling; in its sense that the time was a critical and dangerous one, in its anxious desire to diagnose its diseases and to suggest remedies, in its emphasis upon the industrial nature of the age and the importance of machinery, and in its feeling that the spiritual life of the people was being crushed by the material, the scientific, and the mechanical. The essay, however, differs widely in spirit from

all other contemporary discussions of the subject. It differs in its greater breadth of treatment and in its emphasis upon the moral rather than the economic aspect of the subject.

After indicating in general the spirit of the age Carlyle proceeds to point out its various manifestations. The prevalence of educational machinery is one; the religious machines, such as the Bible Society, supported by "puffing, intrigue and chicane,"[a] are another; the rapid formation of scientific institutions[b] is another. The science of Mind has yielded in interest to physical science. It is supported weakly by the Scottish School, but has become for the most part materialistic in character. Cabanis in France has come to the conclusion that "as the liver secretes bile, so does the brain secrete thought," and that Poetry and Religion are "a product of the smaller intestines." In politics the trust in the efficiency of parliamentary reforms and other political

a The *Quarterly* for June, 1827, in an attack on the translations of the Bible Society refers to the "glowing terms" of praise of its panegyrists.

b For evidence as to the "growing taste for the cultivation of Physical Science" in England as attested by the formation of scientific institutions see the *Quarterly* for June, 1826.

contrivances is evidence of a mechanical turn of thought. Even poetry has gone over to an idol-worship of some "brute-image of Strength."

Such are the manifestations of the mechanical spirit of the age. More important still is an explanation of its origin. Carlyle finds this a moral one. For him the ultimate causes of all phenomena are spiritual, mysterious, profound. Circumstances are the product of man and not man of circumstances. The prevalence of machinery therefore is not the cause of the current conditions, but a symptom of that cause. The cause itself is the placing of men's faith in the outward and mechanical, and the devotion of men's best powers to the development of this province, instead of "applying themselves chiefly to regulate, increase and purify the inward primary powers of man," an enterprise of vastly greater importance. If this is so, then man needs only to be rightly directed to acquire true spiritual freedom; "we are but fettered by chains of our own forging." In the meanwhile we may begin the needed reform, not by attempting to mend a world or a nation,

but by setting diligently about the perfection of our individual selves.

One of the ways in which Carlyle and his great contemporaries, Ruskin, Arnold and Emerson, differ from any other group of English-writing essayists before or since, is their intense concern in national movements and social conditions, coupled with a scorn of mere expediency and a strong desire to see and interpret the broad moral issues. An excellent illustration of this general tendency together with certain differences in their methods of attack and points of view is furnished by their various handling of this question of mechanism and the use of machinery. Each of these men in his own way recognizes the danger of the one-sided development of a mechanical age, and each characteristically protests against it, Ruskin because of his interest in the lower classes and in art and the artistic ordering of life; Arnold because of his faith in the efficacy of a wide culture, an internal perfection to which the externality of machinery is opposed; Emerson because of his absorbing interest in individual development and his fear that machinery will reduce men to

machines;[a] Carlyle because of his conviction of the paramount importance of the moral and religious life and his fear that machinery will turn men from trust in inner inspiration to trust in the external and mechanical. Arnold and Carlyle especially have essentially the same thought, and the famous passage in *Culture and Anarchy* (1867) is little more than a restatement of Carlyle's essay of 1829. When Arnold tells us that "faith in machinery is our besetting danger," that "our whole civilization is mechanical and external," and that "human perfection is in an internal condition," we have Carlyle reëchoed. The possibility of widening the definition of machinery by applying the term to such things as the national wealth, the railways and the coal industries, and to religious and social organizations, was also first indicated in the earlier essay. How clearly is Arnold's very phraseology anticipated in such a sentence as this from *Signs of the Times:* "Not for internal perfection, but for external combinations and arrangements, for institutions, constitutions,—for

a See Emerson's *Works,* Centenary Ed., vol. 5, pages 103 and 163, and vol. 6, page 164.

Mechanism of one sort or other, do they hope and struggle."

The essay called *Characteristics* hardly falls within the period which we have called that of Carlyle's apprenticeship, but it must be included for the sake of completeness in our discussion. Carlyle spoke of it in a letter of December 4, 1831, as "a sort of second *Signs of the Times*," and this is an apt enough description of it. Like the earlier essay it is a searching investigation of contemporary conditions; like that it discovers a single principle, that of Self-Consciousness, corresponding to the Mechanism of *Signs of the Times*, which it applies to every walk of life; in a similar way it finds this principle a symptom rather than a cause of existing spiritual conditions, and it joins a pessimism concerning the present with hope and confidence concerning the future and the spiritual capabilities of man.

Carlyle's much disputed principle of unconsciousness is an important one and will be seen to lie at the root of his whole philosophy. Stated briefly it is this, that "always the characteristic of right performance is a certain spontaneity, an uncon-

sciousness, 'the healthy know not of their health, but only the sick.'" Thus, "the Orator persuades and carries all with him, he knows not how," while the Rhetorician is intensely conscious of every trick by means of which he should have done so; true virtue is a "spontaneous, habitual, all-pervading spirit of Chivalrous Valour," when it becomes conscious of itself it dwindles into a "punctilious Politeness, 'avoiding meats'; 'paying tithes of mint and anise, neglecting the weightier matters of the law.'" Similarly the true Poet differs from the little one in his greater spontaneity of performance.

Applying this principle to contemporary conditions we discover the age to be an intensely self-conscious one. Instead of poetic creation we find men occupied with Theories of Poetry; instead of heroic conduct with Discourses on the Evidences; instead of loyalty and patriotism with Reform Bills and Codifications. The same tendency is to be observed in the character of our speculative thinking. The very existence of Metaphysics is itself a symptom of disease. "In the perfect state, all Thought were but the picture and inspiring

symbol of Action; Philosophy, except as Poetry and Religion, would have no being." Metaphysics is, in essence, a skeptical inquiry. The present is in this sense a highly metaphysical age. It probes into and casts doubt upon all things; "Faith has well nigh vanished from the world."[a]

The criticisms that have been made on this theory as here enunciated have failed, I think, to probe to the bottom of Carlyle's thought. It has been objected, for instance, that men like Dante, Shakespeare and Cervantes were well aware of the greatness of what they had produced. It is true that Carlyle makes something of this point, but it does not constitute the center of his doctrine. We must remember once more that Carlyle is a transcendentalist and that Transcendentalism lays most stress upon the value of inspiration, intuition and the mysterious and primary energies as contrasted with logic, argument and ratiocination.

a Carlyle's theory of the unconsciousness or spontaneity of the production of any great creative work is reinforced by that of Emerson. Their comments on Hamlet, for instance, are very similar. Carlyle says: "The Shakespeare takes no airs for writing *Hamlet* and *The Tempest,* understands not that it is anything surprising." Emerson says: "Shakespeare made his Hamlet as a bird weaves its nest."

What Carlyle is trying to impress upon us is, not that Shakespeare and Dante were totally unconscious of their genius, but that they were unconscious of its processes as explicable, namable or describable. The processes which produce a great poem or a great heroism are unconscious simply because they are profound, mysterious, spiritual, not technical, logical or mechanical.

Consciousness is, as a matter of fact, only another name for Mechanism. Men become intensely self-conscious when they are thinking exclusively of the outward and mechanical; for it is only the mechanical processes which we can explain or talk about with much profit. That this identification is clear in Carlyle's own mind appears in various passages. "Boundless as is the domain of man," he says in the fourth paragraph of the essay, "it is but a small fractional proportion of it that he rules with Consciousness and by Forethought: what he can contrive, nay what he can altogether know and comprehend, is essentially the mechanical, small; the great is ever, in one sense or other, the vital; it is essentially the myste-

rious, and only the surface of it can be understood." Again: "In our inward, as in our outward world, what is mechanical lies open to us: not what is dynamical and has vitality. Of our Thinking, we might say, it is but the mere surface that we shape into articulate Thoughts;—underneath the region of argument and conscious discourse lies the region of meditation; here, in its quiet mysterious depths, dwells what vital force is in us; here, if aught is to be created, and not merely manufactured and communicated, must the work go on. Manufacture is intelligible and trivial; Creation is great, and cannot be understood."

Carlyle's criticism must not, therefore, be understood as meaning that we are thinking too much, but that we are thinking too superficially; not that we should substitute blind instinct for reason, but that we should recognize and cultivate the vital depths of our nature out of which poetry and religion and all that is deepest and highest in us unconsciously spring. To those who have followed the present discussion this doctrine will occasion no surprise. It is in perfect accord with all that he has hitherto spoken.

It is another form of his theory of poetry. It rests upon that transcendental belief in the supremacy of the Reason over the Understanding which, he had stated two years before, constituted, in his belief, the most important feature of the Kantian metaphysics. "The healthy Understanding," he says in the present essay, "we should say, is not the logical, argumentative, but the Intuitive." It is connected also with the constant insistence which we find in *Sartor* and have already noticed, upon the recognition of mystery, as well as with that well-known doctrine of Silence which Carlyle has been ridiculed for vociferating "in thirty volumes." Whoever, therefore, rejects Carlyle's theory of Consciousness must be ready to quarrel with the whole body of thought into the tissue of which this theory is woven.

We have said that the essay on *Characteristics* ends with the strong optimism which in the end prevails in all the early essays. It is evident that man's spiritual progress is a matter not only of faith but of observation. No truth or goodness can ever die; though the forms perish the immortal soul survives. Present conditions need not therefore alarm

us. The principle of life now confined to the conscious and mechanical will once more find its true domain to be the unconscious and dynamical. Evidence is not wanting to indicate that this change is even now taking place. Men are beginning to recognize again that God is present in human affairs and that the age of miracles is not a thing of the past. The mystery of the Infinite is still a mystery. The battle of life may still be fought with submission, courage, and heroic joy. "Behind us, behind each one of us, lie Six Thousand Years of human effort, human conquest: before us is the boundless Time, with its yet uncreated and unconquered Continents and Eldorados, which we, even we, have to conquer, to create; and from the bosom of Eternity there shine for us celestial guiding stars.

'My inheritance how wide and fair!
Time is my fair seed-field, of Time I'm heir.'"

From the above discussion it will be clear that the character of Carlyle's criticism of his times, like his theory of poetry and his practice in history and biography, was determined by that spiritual philosophy which enters into or dominates every one of

his important utterances from the *Life of Schiller* to the *History of Frederick the Great.* It was essentially a moral incitement and to a large extent individualistic. Men are to begin by reforming themselves, not by entering into any large schemes of social reconstruction. This continued to be his position to the end of his life. His skepticism as to the value of any schemes of reform, which later expressed itself in the reactionary sentiments of *Model Prisons* and the frequent contemptuous allusions to the "dismal science" of economics, already appears in the private jottings of his journal and with less personal feeling in his published essays.

Carlyle believed in probing deeply, in striking at the roots of evil and in strengthening the sources of good. These sources he believed to be human and spiritual. The so-called economic theory of history had not been clearly set forth in his day. But *Signs of the Times* and *Characteristics* are in a sense a partial refutation of this theory. In these essays institutions of whatever sort are looked upon as mechanical, accordingly as external, and in comparison with internal

and dynamic forces as of inferior importance. Both in this individualism and in his moral emphasis, Carlyle, though differing in detail, agrees in essentials with the other great didactic essayists whom we have already mentioned in connection with the *Signs of the Times*. Emerson carries individualism to the extent of a sort of philosophical anarchism. Arnold, though he strongly believed in the importance of the principle of equality, devoted himself to the encouragement of the harmonious expansion of the inward powers of the individual man. Ruskin saw the value of coöperation and concerned himself to a considerable extent with economic questions, but he, too, interpreted life from the moral, rather than from the economic standpoint.

Carlyle's attitude toward social problems, though in large measure still valid, seems incomplete to serious students of the present day. Perhaps it is an indication of the partial triumph of the materialistic conception of life which he deprecated that we look upon the adjustment of institutions as of as much importance to the soul of the state as care of the body is necessary to spir-

itual health. "Mending a world" may be a task beyond our powers, but social reorganization on a large scale is no longer believed to be impossible. The clamor of socialism is becoming more and more insistent, and is more and more enlisting the sympathetic attention of thoughtful men. At least we have become convinced that some mechanism must be provided for making moral impetus effective. We must look to men of science and of practical knowledge and training, men willing to deal in patient and painstaking fashion with matters of mechanical detail, to carry out the reform made apparent to us through the awakening of the individual and the social conscience by our Tolstois and our Carlyles. So far as permanent literary value is concerned, however, Carlyle showed in these essays an unerring instinct in dealing powerfully with fundamental moral issues, rather than with mechanical details of ephemeral interest.

V

SARTOR RESARTUS

Anything like a systematic discussion of *Sartor Resartus* does not form a part of the present plan. It would be at best a gratuitous performance, since the book has been analyzed already many times, and is thoroughly familiar to all students and lovers of Carlyle. It will be evident to such a one that *Sartor* has gathered up the reflections and convictions presented in a fragmentary way in the earlier works and repeated them in more compact and striking form. There is little that is new, and sometimes the new statement of truth is less clear or effective than the original. The total impression, however, is far more powerful than that of any earlier writing. There is still no fully rounded or systematized philosophy. But the author, by freeing himself from the tyranny of facts, with which he felt himself obliged largely to deal in the critical essays, has been enabled to give greater space to the enunciation of truth. The comments

on poetry, philosophy and religion and the criticisms of society and the age appear again, not as incidental reflections, but as part of the central theme. These comments are for the most part confined to the first and third books. The first book moves on a distinctly lower plane than the other two; in the third the author rises to his greatest height of poetic power, a height not far below the supremely great. All this is rendered vital and bound together by the spiritual autobiography which forms book two, in which the passage through doubt and unbelief to the attainment of a transcendental philosophy is portrayed. Any adequate discussion of the ethics and metaphysics of *Sartor* would take us far beyond the limits of a short essay. We propose, therefore, to point out only a single characteristic of Carlyle's thought common to both *Sartor* and the earlier essays, and to discuss in some detail the mode of its manifestation in the former.

We have seen everywhere in Carlyle's work that his thought naturally falls into some sort of opposition. Thus he is fond of opposing matter and spirit, appearance and

reality, the Understanding and the Reason, Time and Eternity, doubt and faith, logic and intuition, Mechanics and Dynamics, the conscious and the unconscious, knowledge and mystery. In each of these cases, while allowing a certain inferior value to the former, his chief purpose is to convince with all the power of his eloquence that by far the superior worth belongs to the latter. In *Sartor* this opposition occurs again in all its forms, but it becomes most clearly manifest and most inclusive in the antithesis of two modes of thought characteristic of Teufelsdröckh's mind under different conditions, designated as Transcendentalism and Descendentalism, or as it is more frequently called, Sansculottism.

To make this distinction clear we must say a word about the sources of *Sartor*. It will be remembered that Carlyle derived his notion of a clothes-philosophy from a passage in Swift's *Tale of a Tub*. In section two of that work Swift tells us of a certain sect of philosophers who "held the universe to be a large suit of clothes, which invests everything; that the earth is invested by the air, the air is invested by the stars, and the

stars are invested by the *primum mobile.*" This is generally conceded as having furnished Carlyle with the starting-point of *Sartor.* But Carlyle had in common with Swift something more than a clever idea that the world might be looked upon as a huge suit of clothes. While at college his fondness for Swift's writings and his possession of a certain Swiftian power of satire were noticed by his friends and he was nicknamed "Jonathan" and "The Dean." This satirical power which ruthlessly tears away obscuring veils, exposes shams, and brings to light the practical and material actualities of things, may be looked upon as the Swiftian side of *Sartor.* It is called Descendentalism or Sansculottism.

On the other hand Carlyle's thought derives from the German transcendental philosophy and Goethe. Professor Adamson says that "the guiding principle of all Carlyle's ethical work is the principle of Fichte's speculation that the world of experience is but the appearance or vesture of the divine idea of life; and that he alone has true life who is willing to resign his own personality in the service of humanity." Of his enor-

mous indebtedness to Goethe we have already had sufficient evidence. Novalis and Richter contributed detached ideas and furnished further illustration of the German philosophy appearing in literary form. All these Germans strengthened in Carlyle the mode of thought which we have called transcendental.

The clear indication of opposition in the words Transcendentalism and Descendentalism is further strengthened by the name and description of the hero. The full name, Diogenes Teufelsdröckh,[a] God-born Devil's Dung, indicates the combination in one person of the half malicious Swiftian satire with the ethereal idealism of a Fichte or a Goethe. Carlyle calls attention to this twofold nature of his hero in numerous places. In the chapter on *Reminiscences* the editor remembers seeing in his eyes "gleams of an ethereal or else a diabolic fire"; in the chapter on *Char-*

a The "secret design in the composition of this most uneuphonious proper name" is first noticed in a note to an excellent review of *Sartor* by N. L. Frothingham in the *Christian Examiner* for September, 1836, shortly after the publication of the book in America. The writer finds his conjecture confirmed by the character of the professor, "who is a great radical and seems to be made up of violently opposite elements."

acteristics we are told that his voice screws itself aloft "as into the song of spirits, or else the shrill mockery of fiends," that at times we distinguish "gleams of an ethereal love," "soft wailings of infinite pity," and at others "some half invisible wrinkle of a bitter sardonic humor" so that "you look on him almost with a shudder, as on some incarnate Mephistopheles." His eyes again are described as sparkling with lights, which "may indeed be reflexes of the heavenly stars, but perhaps also gleams from the region of Nether Fire."

The nature of the opposing elements in *Sartor* now becomes clear. The one is to be expressed through the half diabolic medium of satire, the other through seraphic ecstasy or rapt contemplation. The one employs the faculty of the Understanding, the acute understanding and penetrating common sense of a Swift, the other that of the Reason, the divine vision of a Fichte. The one deals with the actual world about us, and beholds man in his social relations, a man among men, but stripped of all such "adventitious wrappages" as disguise his actual manhood; the other deals with the

world of spiritual reality, with the isolated soul brought face to face with the divine universe, spirit meeting with spirit. The one is largely destructive, negative, an exposure of the false, the other is wholly constructive, affirmative, a revelation of the true. The one is partial and needs some higher vision to complete it, the other supplies that deficiency and gives it worth. Both are methods of seeing the truth, and both are necessary to complete and perfect vision. Descendentalism, as we have said, is the faculty which enables us to see beneath outward wrappings of clothing or the like the common human animal, to discern that "within the most starched cravat there passes a windpipe and a weasand," that underneath the choicest cloak there is only "a forked straddling animal with bandy legs" or "a forked radish with a head fantastically carved," and which finds no great difference between the star of a lord and the clown's broad button of Birmingham spelter. Dwelling much upon man's common humanity and helplessness it leads to a sort of radicalism in which the brotherhood of man is recognized, though approached through the

medium of satire. The term "Sansculottism," that is, the condition of being without breeches, a term used to designate the radical republican party during the period of the French Revolution, is an implication of this. The idea had been expressed long before Swift's time and in a more wonderful way than he expressed it. Lear, stripped of his power, finds his royal robes a mockery, and as he enters the hut and finds the naked Edgar, the truth of man's common humanity and helplessness overpowers him. He proceeds to strip off his lendings, his borrowing from the sheep and the silkworm, and to become in appearance what he is in fact, a poor, bare, forked animal. With this idea, then, are naturally connected the social relations of man. Lear thinks of the "poor, naked wretches" exposed to the "pelting of the pitiless storm," and his act is symbolic of his sympathy and feeling of brotherhood with them. All this Carlyle has in mind in his development of the idea of Sansculottism.

Further illustration of the duality of *Sartor* need be only briefly indicated. It is Teufelsdröckh, the Sansculottist, who rises in the tavern with his tumbler of gukguk to

propose a toast to the poor "in Gottes and Teufels Namen"; it is he whose sharp sarcasm suggests that the scarecrow, as clothed person *par excellence*, should be allowed special privilege, such as trial by jury; and whose whimsical imagination has the strange habit of suddenly divesting the occupants of a drawing-room of their clothing and beholding them straddling there in nakedness.

It is Diogenes, the Transcendentalist, on the other hand, who alone with the stars sits in the watch tower of the Wahngasse, looking down upon the living flood, hurrying from Eternity onward to Eternity. "The world with its loud traffickings retires," and he is alone with the universe, one mysterious presence communing with another. In the deeper speculations of this mood man is seen to be a spirit, and the universe to be but the Phantasy of his dream. We are surrounded by Phantasmagoria; we live as in a dream grotto and the very warp and woof of the canvas whereon our dreams are painted, namely, space and time, are themselves only modes of thought and vanish when we try to grasp them. To the eye of vulgar logic, indeed, man is but "an omniverous Biped

that wears Breeches," but to the eye of Pure Reason he is a spirit, a divine Apparition, a revelation of the spirit in the form of flesh, dwelling in a sky-woven universe.

Thus the author arrives again at the recurring thought. Everything yields to him a double meaning. In the Imperial Sceptre and the ox-goad alike he sees decay, contemptibility (this is Descendentalism); yet as the revelation of spirit he finds in both Poetry and reverend worth. "For matter, were it never so despicable, is spirit, the manifestation of spirit; were it never so honorable, can it be more?"

In this way the two ideas draw together for final treatment in the last chapter of the first book, in which the unity of all nature is emphasized. Not only is all physical nature correlated, "the smithy-fire kindled at the sun," but physical and spiritual are shown also to be one, that is, philosophical monism is taught. All objects are windows looking into infinitude. "Matter exists only spiritually, and to represent some idea and body it forth." "What thou seest is not there on its own account; strictly taken is not there at all." Finally, at the close of

the chapter we are prepared for the new way of taking up the whole matter again in the form of human experience by the news of the arrival of Heuschrecke's "six considerable paper-bags" and an anticipation of the editor's task in straightening out the material.

It is not necessary to trace in detail the progress of the spiritual warfare described in book two, but it is important to point out that the opposing elements are precisely the same as those of book one. The Everlasting No is not, I believe, to be understood, as one critic has defined it, as the "sum of facts adverse to the moral order of the universe," but rather as the spirit of Denial, which, as we have seen, represents for the modern man a necessary stage in the soul's progress towards spiritual freedom. Divorced, indeed, from any capacity for the higher vision, it does represent the spirit of Time or the devil. In the essay on *Goethe's Helena,* Carlyle had thus described the character of Mephistopheles: "Such a combination of perfect Understanding with perfect Selfishness, of logical Life with moral Death; so universal a denier, both in

heart and head,—is undoubtedly a child of Darkness, an emissary of primeval Nothing; and coming forward, as he does, like a person of breeding, and without any flavor of brimstone, may stand here, in his merely spiritual deformity, at once potent, dangerous and contemptible, as the best and only genuine Devil of these latter times." Doubt and denial, however, cannot be conceived of as evil except when they are final processes. When preliminary steps toward affirmation and reconstruction they are means of good. It is because the hero of *Sartor* joins to the spirit of denial the will to believe, because he is capable of both Descendentalism and Transcendentalism, that the ultimate outcome of his struggle is victory.

It is often complained that Carlyle's doctrine of renunciation and duty, which is the final message of *Sartor*, and his ideal of a Blessedness which agrees to renounce all claim upon the world's gifts of happiness, fame or what not, while consecrating life and labor to the world's betterment, is narrow and incomplete. Doubtless it is so. To no man is it given to see and to appropriate in the form of experience the whole truth.

Surely it is enough for one book that for thousands of readers it has helped to sharpen insight, strengthen veracity and encourage devotion of purpose to noble ends.

CONCLUSION

The years between 1814 and 1831 have been designated as those of Carlyle's apprenticeship, because during this period he was consciously dependent upon the thought and learning of other men and had not yet given his ideas a distinctly coherent and individual form. The foregoing discussion, however, will make it plain that his later work was simply a clearer enunciation and wider application of ideas already gathered and reflected upon in the early years. There is, for instance, not one of his philosophical and religious teachings which does not find place here. The transcendental doctrine of the reality of spirit and the phenomenal character of matter, which dominates all his thought and is no less important to the appreciation of *The French Revolution* than to the understanding of *Sartor*, is more clearly stated in the *Critical Essays* than anywhere in his later work. The ethical ideas of renunciation, of reverence and hero-worship, of sincerity and hatred of cant, as well as the gospel of work, are all touched

upon or fully expounded. Carlyle's central religious idea, the belief in an immanent divine presence rendering all phenomena miraculous and worthy of reverence, is also fully set forth. His attitude toward the Christian religion as one among many forms, though incomparably the highest, constituting a continuous revelation of God through all ages and to all men, remains through life practically unchanged.

Carlyle dealt with the theory of poetry to a far greater proportionate extent in his early essays than at any later time. His emphasis upon the instructional value of poetry, his identification of its ultimate purpose with that of philosophy and religion, and his belief in the sacred character of the true poet or man of letters, are repeated in *Heroes and Hero-Worship* and elsewhere throughout his later writings.

The early biographical studies are of great value, not only because of their intrinsic merit, but because they make clear to us the theory of biographical writing which he faithfully practised from this time on. That the true biography should set forth the ideal based upon and growing out

of the actual, that the external facts of history should be treated merely as the manifestation of an unseen, spiritual life, and that these facts should be used so far as possible to furnish warning or help and inspiration for the life of our own perplexing age, are the most important convictions illustrated and expounded in the early books and essays.

A further application of Carlyle's central philosophy becomes manifest in an analysis of his specific criticisms of his own age. The appeal for a more widespread cultivation of the dynamical and unconscious part of our nature was made to England in a critical and troubled period of her history, and is to be understood as the reaction of a spiritual philosopher against the growing materialism of a mechanical age.

Sartor Resartus is to be regarded as the culmination of all his earlier work. Under the opposing categories of Transcendentalism and Descendentalism he marshaled all the philosophical ideas which he had previously advocated and combatted. In the second book of that work he outlined the ideal spiritual biography, and in the

third he included, in such chapters as *Helotage*, *Natural Supernaturalism* and *Church Clothes*, his most profound criticisms of society and religion.

In working with the materials of the present study, the author has become more than ever impressed with Carlyle's sense of the sacredness of his calling. He worked ever in the consciousness that the eye of his great Taskmaster was upon him.

> Here eyes do regard you,
> In Eternity's stillness;
> Here is all fulness,
> Ye brave, to reward you;
> Work, and despair not.

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